A WAYFARER'S FAITH

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A WAYFARER'S FAITH

A WAYFARER'S FAITH:

ASPECTS OF

THE COMMON BASIS
OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

BY

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CHAPTER I.

THE COMMON BASIS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

THERE is a well known story of how a man of letters a century ago, when questioned as to his religious views, answered that all sensible men were of one religion, and to the further query as to what that religion might be, made the curt response: "Sir, sensible men never say." The story is characteristic of its age, and of the attitude towards religion of some of its ablest men. Many of the greatest thinkers, whatever the religious opinions of the circle in which they were educated may have been, held themselves aloof from controversy on questions of creed and church, looking upon such disputes with the kindly contempt of tolerant beings who themselves had reached a larger and freer atmosphere than that which surrounded those who struggled amid the dust of the plains beneath their feet. Something of this spirit, which is so clearly manifested in the world of politics and letters, can be seen too in many of the prominent religious organisations of the day. Men were weary of the hateful bitterness which had characterised the theological

controversies of the seventeenth century, and the wider outlook which came with the age of illumination showed itself even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, when in Germany Catholic and Protestant ecclesiastical authorities united in a common religious celebration at Fulda of the anniversary of the mission of Saint Boniface. But beneath the surface of this toleration, which seemed to be increasing between Catholic, Protestant and Jew, we may perhaps feel that the uniting influence lay not so much in a profound sense of the underlying verities common to all their various forms of faith as in a certain vagueness as to any form of dogmatic belief, a distrust of dogma in itself, if not an indifference to the things which that dogma attempted to represent. Men were willing to leave others free to have their own religious beliefs, and distrusted the enthusiasm of the fanatic, of the man who wished to convert others to view life as he himself did. The profession of a recognition of good in all religions went hand in hand with the recognition of their imperfection, and a doubt as to how far they were not so much alike sharing in truth as alike mingled with error. This attitude is illustrated by Lessing's famous fable of the three rings, which is perhaps the most quoted passage in "Nathan the Wise." None but the father can tell the true ring from the counterfeits which he has had made; the sons must therefore each treat the others as in the same position as himself. No one creed can claim to

itself a pre-eminence over the others, none but God can distinguish the true from the false. The lesson of tolerance which Lessing taught in his drama was one of which our age, as well as his own, has need, but if we are only to view all forms of faith with respect because we are conscious of the difficulty of discerning the true from the false, we have reached a position which may indeed promote friendly relationships in the ordinary intercourse of life, but which cannot in the end be satisfactory either to ourselves or to others. Tolerance founded upon doubt can never be an inspiring virtue.

Is it not possible for us, however, since we realise this, to take a further step? We need to feel, not the imperfections of all the varying creeds, religions and irreligions, but the inherent strength and power of each, and from a consciousness of this to rise to some dim realization of the golden thread of truth which runs through all sincere faiths, however degraded or erroneous they may at first sight appear to be.

In the eighteenth century there swept over Europe a wave of new thought, which liberated men's minds from old superstitions and the narrowness of former dogmatism, and produced a sort of freemasonry of new ideas between men whose national religious and political upbringing had been wholly different. But this wave of liberal thought failed to produce a permanent sense of unity; in due time came a counter-movement when men

turned from the generalisations and the vague optimism of these syncretist philosophers. The attacks which the sceptical critics had levelled on the older creeds were too negative in character: content to find out the weakness of their opponents' position and to expose it to contempt and ridicule, they had failed to realise the strength which lay deeper than the intellectual interpretations of belief which they had assailed.

Thus the nineteenth century has witnessed in the political world an extraordinary revival of national spirit, especially amongst smaller peoples, and on the other hand a similar revival within the different religious communities. The eighteenth century humanists would have foreseen the one as little as the other. To them it seemed that beneath the clear light of reason the old dogmas of the sects would each lose their force, just as the ignorant patriotism of their day; which they saw to be so largely built upon mistaken prejudice, would give away to their wide cosmopolitan spirit which felt itself above these petty views.

The revival of national feeling among the little peoples of Europe, with no wealth of capital or military force to give them aid, which we have witnessed during the last century, is, however, hardly less remarkable than the revival of life amongst the different Churches and religious communities of the western world. There was surely something lacking in the theory of life of these men of broad view of a former day who for

all their breadth could not find room for enthusiasm such as this. We are beginning to see that the truer cosmopolitan of the future will not cease to be a citizen of his own country when he becomes a citizen of the world, that the wider fellowship will lose its content and its meaning if it is to involve a denial of patriotism and not rather to subsume it as a necessary element in the true international spirit; and so in the inner life of the soul we must seek to harmonize the various contending creeds, not by destroying any particular creed, or attempting to replace it by some vague generalisation, devoid of life or of attractive and inspiring force, but by attempting to appeal to the best in each, realising that each must have some value of its own, just as the poorest of peoples has its own peculiar traits and virtues; and thus gradually draw the sympathies and thoughts of men nearer together by reason of the common life from which must spring all that is good in the religion of each one.

There is a beautiful saying of Penn's which sets forth what many good men of very different creeds must have felt again and again before he gave the thought expression: "The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here makes them strangers." May we not venture to carry further the thought and say, that this religion includes

Here Harvey, who was the intimate and biographer of Lord Kelvin (Sylvanus Thompson) seeks to break down the apparent conflict between Science & Religion which, in his opinion the personal reactions of Lord Kelvin had shown erroneous

every servant of truth, and every man who is recognizing in practice in his own life the need of his fellows, by subordinating his own happiness and interest to theirs? That there is in reality a religion which all good men share we do, indeed, recognise in practice in everyday life; how else can we explain the appeal to conscience, to the sense of duty, to the unselfish desire to benefit others, which is constantly made to men of the most divergent religious views, whose theories of life would not be accepted by each other for a moment?

How is it then possible for us to make more clear to our eyes and to others this common basis of religion, and to build more securely upon it the structure of our lives?

We must not be disappointed if it is difficult to give intellectual expression to this basis of life; at best such expression must be imperfect, and we can only hope to arrive at it very slowly. Perhaps some hint of the way in which one may look at the problem may be given by that strange poem of W. B. Yeats "The Indian upon God." The poet pictures the way in which the creatures of earth each frame their own idea of the Divine Creator after their own image; some vast Brocken spectre, perhaps, some may say, cast by the reflection of imagination upon the clouds of the world without. And yet the poem has surely within it another meaning. To each creature comes, coloured, it is true, by different visions,

I love the quiet points of departure that TEH almost always takes; they are so universal and temporary.

some dim picture of the Maker, some sense of His sustaining presence in the world and in their own lives :

I passed along the water's edge, below the humid trees,
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes round my knees,
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs ; and saw the moorfowl pace
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw them cease to chase
Each other round in circles, and heard the eldest speak :
" Who holds the world between His bill and made us strong and weak,
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky.
The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams from His eye."
I passed a little further on, and heard a lotus talk :
" Who made the world, and ruleth it, He hangeth on a stalk,
For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide
Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide."
A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes
Brimful of starlight, and he said, " The stamper of the skies,
He is a gentle roebuck ; for how else, I pray, could He
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me ? "
I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say :
" Who made the grass and made the worms and made my feathers gay,
He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all the night
His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots of light."

One can readily understand that some readers might be shocked by what would seem to them to be idolatrous images. Yet does not the whole poem show something more than the fact that men worship images of God after their own likeness ? Beneath the grossest idolatry there

may be at least some sense of contact with the Unseen. Though man, like his fellow-creatures, cannot behold unveiled the vision of the Eternal, somewhere under every imperfect picture which our dogmas have framed of Him does not there lie at least some trait of faint resemblance? And, however much we may endeavour to remove from our minds all anthropomorphic conceptions we needs must think as men. Our most abstract thoughts are but spiritualised metaphors, the ghosts and shadows of the fully-coloured language of our earlier days or of a more primitive people. The moment we think of the origin and meaning of words, we realise that this is so; when we speak of conceiving a thought, grasping an idea, abandoning an argument, we are using metaphors which were once bold and vivid but are now scarcely perceived as such at all. And so in all our formulated thoughts of the Unseen we may be said to be in a sense idolators. But only sinfully so, if we wilfully cleave to the lower forms when we have had vision of a higher. The fact that we express our thoughts on religion through the medium of the terms of the material world does not mean that the religious truths which they express are dependent upon, and are evolved out of, the physical world, any more than the intellectual processes of conception and perception are dependent on or derived from the physical processes after which they are named. But it does surely mean that we must recognise the necessary

imperfection of our efforts to express the unseen realities, whether in religious creed or philosophical dogma.

If we are convinced that there is a real unity underlying the religious life of every sincere man, whether he call himself religious or no, how can we best promote the growth of this sense of unity, so that in every form of faith the best may be strengthened and drawn into a sense of membership of a wider whole ?

In the first place we must endeavour to be faithful to the best ideal of our own party, of our own church or creed, to insist on the positive side of what it teaches rather than its negations. The true protestant, for instance, should be zealous to protest for a living ideal which he feels to correspond to his needs, and not, as too often has been the case in the past, merely to protest against evils and mistakes connected with another ideal.

Then realizing the vastness of truth, and the limitations of our own powers of apprehending it, we must be willing to recognize that there must be other aspects of truth which we, as individuals or as a religious community, have not yet apprehended, and that the whole truth must needs be too great for any human mind or system to express. This attitude of mind should surely be perfectly compatible with an enthusiastic loyalty to that vision of the truth which has been given to us or our community, and with a desire to share this vision with others.

This is of course the apotheosis of individualism in religion, but is only the expression of a "natural right" to spiritual self-determination, which is the basic concept of modern religious tolerance

To attempt to surrender our own expression of the Truth as we see it, and replace it by an expression drawn from the vision of others is to make in the inner life an error like that of the school of Bologna in painting. The Caracci and their followers deliberately aimed at acquiring the peculiar excellencies of each of the great masters who preceded them, the harmonies of Raphael, the colour of Titian, the vigour and the grandiose forms of Michael Angelo. They hoped to combine all these and thus achieve a higher perfection than their masters, but in so doing they failed to express themselves in their own way, for they were always painting things as they imagined they ought to see them, and not as they really saw them.

The great artist, like Rembrandt, will honour and admire a Raphael or a Correggio without seeking to imitate them or to borrow their technique. And so while we recognise the vision of truth that comes to men of different views from our own, we must not abandon our own vision, or our attempt to express it faithfully, because we know that we see a part and not the whole.

Every great religious movement has been in its origin or at its highest point universal in its aspiration, claiming to make appeal to all mankind and to become at length the religion of the whole world. And it is this very universal claim which seems to some dispassionate critics so narrow-spirited and fanatical, which bears witness to the force and reality of that deepest religious life

which underlies all difference of dogma, and finds its expression in all these varying faiths. At the moment of its budding forth, the tiny twig feels within it the expanding life of the whole tree. "I am the true tree, and the tree that is to be." it may be imagined as saying; though the great boughs above it do not stir in the wind that shakes it to and fro. The twig may have within it the possibility of growth to a size exceeding the stem from which it now springs, or it may remain only a twig; but in either case it is a part of the tree, and in a sense it is the tree; its life is the tree's life. So every great religious movement, when at its best and highest, looks forward to world-wide extension; it may be that the flood of life takes new channels and only a tiny sect remains to bear witness to what has been, but yet, when its members were filled with their first enthusiasm, and went forth into the world to win others to their views, they were strong because somehow or other they had come into touch with the eternal; their creed and organisation may have corresponded only to the need of the day, and of a limited number of people, or it may have been of wider application and able to endure for a longer time, but in spite of these limitations, the creed and organisation represent an inner life through which their members came into touch with the source of all life and strength.

Our task then must be to strive to be more conscious of this fact in our own lives, and

in elaborating our own systems, as well as in dealing with and considering the religious views of others. In discarding the transient elements, the husks of dogma, we have to respect the seed-corn of life within them. The recognition of this will make us more reverent towards even the hoary errors of aniquity, and the methods of thought and life which to us are outworn, but were once living, and still may be living to some.

This surely is the lesson which we may draw from that touching story related by John Cassian of the monk Serapion, which Auguste Sabatier once told to his pupils. In his old age the good monk had suddenly been brought to realise, by the preaching of two missioners, the error which he had committed in thinking of the Eternal as a being like himself, fashioned in human form. His friends gathered round him to thank God for his deliverance from the grievous anthropomorphic heresy, when, in the midst of their prayers, the old man fell in tears to the ground with the pathetic cry: "Woe's me, wretched man that I am! they have taken away my God and I have none to hold to or worship or pray to now."

In our work of thought or of practical endeavour we shall need above all to realise the value of humble reverence for truth for its own sake, and of the recognition that wherever goodness is, there is that which the theist knows as the Divine, which others may speak of as the enduring spirit-

Isn't this a perfect gem of a paragraph? I love it. I thought of it.

ual ideal, but which, by whatever name we call it, is the inspiring and illuminating reality which shines through every unselfish deed and thought, and makes our lives of worth.

We are sensible of this uniting force, however much our ethical ideals may differ. We cannot explain the common principles which justify the ideal of a Gordon and that of a Tolstoy, but we must surely feel that those ideals are in some way branches from the same good tree ; it may well be that just as in the intellectual world different bents of genius each have their place and justification, so too in the moral have different types of the ethical ideal. The scientific mind, the practical, executive talent of the business man, the speculative powers of the metaphysician, and the creative gifts of the poet and artist, each have their place, and no one human mind can combine them all. So, too, it may be with the moral ideals realised here in our human lives. Because one is good, another is not wholly wrong. There may be varieties of goodness just as there are differences of shape and beauty between flower and flower. But while we recognise this, we surely need too to realise that there must ultimately be some vital connection between these different ideals, although we ourselves may not be able to perceive the unifying influence or principle. Is it not here that the Union of Ethical Societies fails, in that after insisting upon " the supreme importance of the knowledge, love and practice of the Right,"

their manifesto goes on to disclaim " the acceptance of any one ultimate criterion of right " as a condition of ethical fellowship? Yet unless there be some such criterion, can we speak of " the Right " at all? The capital " R " is an unconscious survival of the theistic expression of thought, or rather the expression of the essentially religious spirit of man, which in spite of a creed of intellectual agnosticism, recognises the Divine in life and does obeisance to it under another name. The idea of good and the thought of God are not connected together merely by a similarity of sound; they have but one origin. Thus, if where goodness is, there God is, we must be able to find evidence, even where there may be no intellectual knowledge of God, of the recognition of a unique worth in the good apart from all attempted explanations of its value. And perhaps we cannot do better than take an example from the writings of a master sceptic, to show how in spite even of an apparent intention to make mock of the failure of the good and unselfish man, and of the utterly impracticable nature of his ideal, a kind of homage is yet paid to the ideal and to its votary, and through them to the source of their inspiration.

Readers of Voltaire's " Candide " will recall the figure of the Anabaptist Jacques, the upright and unselfish man who perishes in spite of all his trust in overruling good. Voltaire in picturing his death would appear to be casting scorn upon

a complacent view of a universe where such a thing might happen again and again, and as far as any practical teaching goes he would seem merely to point out that righteousness and faith may be not only unavailing to ward off calamity, but may actually bring it upon those who make such a standard their sole guide. And yet, even as you read, you feel how much nobler and better it is to perish like Jacques, with the unswerving faith of a good man, than to live on contentedly digging one's garden and enjoying its fruits in selfish peace. And however much we may be conscious that in the moment of trial, face to face with mortal peril, we ourselves might swerve aside, might hesitate and fail, we yet know that if we could make our choice in a cool hour, reviewing calmly what we ought to do, and what we would do if we could be true to the best that is in us, we should choose the honourable failure of the good man rather than the success of the bad. In itself we know it to be better, apart from all thought of consequence. And in practice we know how in the presence of the loveliness of an unselfish act all lower thoughts of pleasure and of profit fade away. Face to face with the enduring ideal that shines forth from the good deed, lower ideals shrivel and sink into nothingness. Even truer is this of goodness made real to us in personality, and here it is that those of us who call ourselves Christians may find the keystone to the continual self-revelation of God to man, in that supreme revelation of the Divine

Personality is thus but one of many channels through which the revelation of the ideal comes to us.

nature in the unique personality of Jesus, which for the Church is the centre of inspiration and the explanation of the light which shines in all other lives.

I cannot help feeling that you are in the heartiest sympathy with all of this

If we can unite in reverencing the good and unselfish spirit, wherever it manifests itself in human lives, so too, we need to reverence everywhere the search after truth, and the service of Truth for its own sake. Surely one of the most helpful signs of our age is found in this increasing recognition of spiritual kinship between seekers after Truth of most divergent creed; not the least of the benefits of the Higher Criticism and the problems with which the minds of men have been confronted through the advance of science has been that in the readjustment of thought and life which is going on all about us, men have grown aware that they are not fighting their battles alone, but that far and near are kindred spirits going through a like struggle, and even that those whom they had fancied foemen were really their allies. This is the beginning of a movement wider and deeper than the so-called religious controversies which embitter the surface of our political life, the prelude to a new and wider Catholicism of the spirit, in which all the servants of Truth and of humanity may unite without sacrifice of conviction in a sense of true brotherhood. Something of this underlying unity is recognised both in the supreme moments of our individual lives and in great times of national crisis, such as

come in the birthpangs of a new movement or the brave endeavour to stem some rising tide of evil. Thus it came about that in the great uprising of German democracy of 1848, the colours which symbolised the new hopes of the people were often consecrated by a public religious ceremony in which all faiths united, and in the little Bavarian town of Furth, the Jewish Rabbi, as representing the smallest denomination of the town, was by common consent chosen to perform the ceremony. But we do not need to go so far back or to such a distant place to find instances of the way in which men of varying creed have found themselves uniting with those who are opposed to all forms of religion in defence of some common cause, inspired by some uniting ideal, though but dimly realized. Here, surely, is the truest test of that which is Catholic, the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, which the dogmas of theology can but imperfectly explain, but which is realized even now by all who seek to serve whole-heartedly the truth, and therefore, too, their fellowmen.

There remains a further practical question to be faced. If we recognise that the good finds expression in various ways, that men in act and thought alike may differ from each other, and yet the inner source of their spiritual life may be the same, are we to abandon the endeavour to find some intellectual synthesis of their divergent ideals? Must we cease to attempt to express

in terms of thought that which we recognize as transcending all human thought and much more our imperfect terms? Surely this would be a mistake. Though not only for our own lives but for the whole life of humanity upon the earth it should prove that our processes of creed building and church making are necessarily imperfect, we must still for ever strive to express in thought and in act the life of the spirit, which grows and deepens as it is faithfully expressed. Creed and deed alike, we feel, are but the raiment of the life; they fade and are outgrown, yet they are not to be fiercely torn to pieces or lightly thrown aside. Even though we may never hope to be able to explain to ourselves or to others the common basis of our ethical ideals and of our religious life, we must never cease to try to find some explanation and to give what expression to it we can.

The vision of truth that we have now, our intellectual expression of our relationship to the world, and of our duty in it, is we recognise, imperfect; it is no key to the universe, to unlock every mystery for us, still less for others; but it may prove a sufficient lamp, and one whose rays grow ever brighter, to light our footsteps onward or (to change the metaphor) it may be a clue to the great labyrinth about us which may be of use to others besides ourselves, though some may come to the goal by a very different way. Certainly the experience of all the great mystics would

seem to show that as we ascend the Heavenly mountain, one from one side, one from another, our paths draw nearer to each other, and so across the night between, we may listen to our fellow pilgrims' voices, and realize that some day we shall meet face to face.

This closely resembles the peroration to Wilson's "Mobile Declaration".

CHAPTER II.

THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

It is difficult for us, and some may even feel that it is impossible, to make an impartial survey of an institution of which we ourselves form a part; on the other hand, it is equally difficult, unless one can realize something of its life from the inside, to appreciate the real nature of that life. And thus it must ever be peculiarly hard for us to understand the true relationship of the Christian churches to the world in which they work and to the ideal which guides them. And yet as we seek to see the difficulties others feel, and to enter into sympathy alike with the critic without and the workers within, we may come near at least to understanding some portion of the truth. It may remain true that "all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool," but as we endeavour to clear our minds and hearts of prejudice and to use others' eyes as well as our own, the pool grows clearer and the reflection becomes less broken, and more nearly an image of the reality it represents.

To see the failure of the Church does not mean that we ignore its victories: but if we are to carry

The indictment

those victories further, it must be by noting our shortcomings, and all that we have not achieved. Looking out upon the life of men to-day, we cannot forget how, bad as it is, society has been again and again in large measure redeemed and kept alive through lives that have been the light and strength of the Church as well as of the world, but this need not prevent us from seeing how far the Church as a whole has failed to act in (1) the same way.

Organised Christianity to-day in England, as represented in the churches, is very largely a middle class institution. Not only the very rich, but the (2) great mass of the poorer workers, stand aloof from it. It has not given its strength to prophesy against (3) the evils that attack our social life; and to remedy (4) above all that utter separation of the lives of rich and poor, employer and employed, which is the terrible characteristic of twentieth-century urban civilisation.

There is much religious "activity," of a limited kind, using old, and recognised channels of expression, and an earnestness in defence of particular religious views or in attacking particular errors of doctrine or of forms of worship. But if we can for a moment forget our own individual standpoint and endeavour to look from the point of view of an outsider upon such religious enthusiasm as shows itself upon different sides in, let us say, the present (c. 1907) education controversy, we shall surely feel that if this represents the life of the churches, they

Strictly speaking this is not so entirely applicable to America: Much bourgeois "Social Christianity has been preached, but, in general, the Rich cease to be formal Episcopalians

and the labor union - or Socialism - becomes the Gospel of the poor, - in lesser degree however than in England and the Continent

are far indeed removed from the spirit of their Founder.

Note the skilful way in which Harvey leads us to the conviction that we must find the real Christian in his actions his life, not his profession

"I love to see these Christians fight," was the remark of one able critic as he left a room where a public body had been engaged in discussing some phase of the "religious difficulty" in education. It is true that such a charge is no new one; as far back as the middle of the second century the philosopher Celsus brought a like one against the Christians of his day.* But since those early days too, there has been continual protest within the Church against this very spirit, and it has been in that series of protests that some, perhaps, may trace the true apostolic succession of teachers and guides. Age after age these leaders have found new help and inspiration as they turned toward the source from which the strength of the Church first sprang, and it is noteworthy that now, as often in the past, many of the men who are estranged from the Church have nothing but respect—nay, often reverence—in their thought of Christ and of these followers of His. They would have very different thoughts of Christianity if all who profess and call themselves Christians had realised that ideal of the meaning of the name by which they are

* The words of Celsus ring strangely in our ears after these seventeen centuries and more: "You may hear all those who differ so widely, and who assail each other in their disputes with the most shameless language, uttering the words, 'The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world'" (Origen, "Contra Celsum," v. § 64; and cf. iii. § 12).

called which William Penn once expressed in the words, "To be like Christ, then, is to be a Christian." If only we had all more clearly before us that vision, we could not but be filled not merely with burning shame at our own failure, but with longing to be more helpful to our fellows, and to draw nearer to them, as we would grow nearer to our Master's spirit. And this desire within us will surely be strengthened as we turn towards that wonderful reflection of His teaching gathered together for us in the closing chapters of the Gospel of John. In that unique picture of the mind and heart of the Master there are traits over which we sometimes pause and wonder; sayings which, when we can free our eyes from the scales with which custom has covered them, seem to shine with a light brighter than we can bear. And in that chapter, in which we listen as silent witnesses to the great charter of futurity, the prayer of the Founder for His Church that is to be, there are words which are so full of lofty purpose that we hesitate to apply them to our lives; unconsciously, perhaps, we have been wont to read them over and treat them as metaphor, meant to inspire but not to be realized; and gradually we have lost hold of their true significance, the inner life of thought beyond them.

How truly can we say that we have realized, as individuals or as a Church, this picture which that prayer gives us of the Master's aim and desire for us?

The ideal of unity and heavenly fellowship reaches its spiritual perigee in this passage from John.

cf Sadhana Chapter I "Realization through the Universe"

"And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me, *that they may be one, even as we are.* . . . Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word; *that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee,* that they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.*"

"So lofty is the thought that one may wonder whether, if these words had not come down to us as they have done, and some later Christian mystic had dared to utter this as his ideal, he would not have been treated as a madman or a heretic. It is hard to think of what it means: a unity of Christians one with another, even as there is unity between the Divine Father and the unique Son.

Note how clearly Harvey cuts loose from the traditional theology & its attitudes.

In the bygone days of scholastic theology men might have gone on to unfold the meaning of this by showing how unity of substance did not remove the difference of person; but these thoughts do not live for us to-day as for our forefathers. We must seek to find the meaning of Christ's union with the Father, not by the road of mediæval metaphysics, but by some method which may appeal to our moral consciousness.

Is it not a fact that Christ is most truly revealed to us as in unity with the Father in his identification of himself with suffering and degraded humanity, as most truly Divine when he eats with publicans and sinners, pours out his strength

This is the beautiful thought with which Eshleman idealizes both Socrates and Christ as primordial ex-

for the sick and suffering, and his life for those who have rejected him and at best have misunderstood him?

The Church, then, is most likely to attain to that inward unity for which her Founder prayed by following the guidance of his life. She will be most like him in laying upon herself and claiming as her own the sufferings and evils that befall, or should befall, men in the world without; least like him and least likely to attain this Divine unity when she claims rights and privileges for herself, when she insists on her superiority, when she turns from her the publican and sinner, or leaves them to meet the punishment which is their due.

The union of Christians with each other is to be witness to the world of the Divine mission of Jesus. Men are to believe on him because they see how his life and spirit hold together communities with differing organisations and men of widely varying personality. The union is not to destroy personality or variety of character, but to underlie all difference. It is no external machinery to unite us in a single visible organisation by which individuality would be stamped out or fettered in growth. There is little trace of any such machinery in the earliest history of the Church, and the ages and places where it has been most perfect have not been those which we think of as nearest in spirit to Christ, nor those men most like Him whose lives have been spent merely in the development of such organisation.

Perhaps the only one of the first group of disciples who possessed powers of organisation was Judas Iscariot; and some critics may say that he at least has had an apostolic succession of followers throughout the history of the Church. One remembers the terrible saying of Renan*: "L'histoire de l'Église sera le plus souvent désormais l'histoire des trahisons que subira l'idée de Jésus"; and though no churches have been dedicated to SS. Ananias and Sapphira, they have become in practice the patrons of too many Christian lives. But if we cannot wish for an external unity such as that for which many good men plead, we have, nevertheless, constantly to strive after a deeper union of spirit in the service of our fellows, in the search after truth, in love to our Lord.

First let us take our need of sincerity. Perhaps nothing so holds many men of to-day from Christ as the sense of the insincerity of those who call themselves Christians. Our worship, our hymns and prayers, are full of unreality; we persuade ourselves, perhaps, that we still believe in dogmas which have ceased to have any influence upon our lives. We shut our eyes to new truths because we are really afraid to be free, and what was the chalice of a new truth to our fathers becomes a poison-cup to us and our children. If the Church is to regain and to retain the respect of honest thinkers we must welcome fair-minded inquiry wherever it be directed, and not fear to open our eyes to the sun.

* "Les Apôtres," p. 56.

And it is not only intellectual sincerity in accepting new truths that is needed; if the old truths are to be made real to our day, we must be prepared to translate them into language which people can understand. It is worse than useless often to attempt to hand them on in the garments of the old words by which they were clothed in former days, for as truth is a living thing, and words fade and lose their meaning, the form in which it is rightly expressed must change from age to age. It is not enough, then, to repeat some passage of Scripture, some familiar verse of religious poetry, or some words of a man of God of former days, to bring help to men to-day, even though the words are full of meaning to us because we have entered into the inward experience which they represent. Some have heard the words so often that they are now almost meaningless; others cannot be touched by a mode of thought which was the outcome of another time. They need the truths that lie behind the old words and the outworn methods of thinking, but they must be re-expressed if they are to reach them.

The eternal realities of which the New Testament writers had hold, which filled their souls and made them struggle with words and metaphors to express some glimpse of what they felt, could never be completely represented by any language. Yet we have taken the words of the Scripture and treated them as though they were so many phials of truth in solution. The exquisite flowers of love and

faith have been crushed and bruised in the mortar of the theologians to produce the infallible dogmas of our orthodoxy. But the inward life does not live upon the abstractions of the theologian any more than our outward life upon the compressed drugs of the chemist, however perfect the process of their making may have been. Cannot we, then, honestly confess that our dogmas are but imperfect human attempts to fathom the deep things of God, symbols that stand for something which transcends them as much as the mother's face surpasses the poor drawing which her child may make of it? Such a drawing can only be understood by the eyes of love, and we need the same spirit to make our dogmas full of meaning.

It is not only in intellectual matters that the Church has been insincere. Many who are no thinkers feel that she has not honestly attempted to carry out her own teachings. "Blessed are the gentle," "Blessed are the poor in spirit," are explained in many a commentary, but illustrated by too few lives. Yet the only adequate commentary on the beatitudes is the life of a real follower of Christ.

The fact is that many Christians think that by bowing down in worship before Christ they are His followers, forgetting His own test for such: "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" We write of Him, it may be, as Our Lord with capital letters, when He is not our lord at all, nor the master and controller of our lives.

There is a great deal of false reverence about this lip-worship of phrase and form that actually keeps us from getting as near as we might to the true spirit of followers of Christ.

If we are lovers and followers of the truth as Jesus bids us be, we must recognise our essential kinship and comradeship with all others who sincerely seek the truth, even though they may attack us and fail for the moment to see all the light which may shine for our eyes so clearly: in the mere search after truth their souls are turned towards the light and unconsciously fed and aided by the Source of all truth. Nor must we think of them as our blind brothers merely, for they may be fighting a far greater army of foes than we, placed as outposts of the hosts of God, surrounded by the enemy, and overborne themselves for a while, that afterwards the victorious ranks of their comrades may press on over their bodies to conquests of which we have not even dreamed.

And how far have we failed in unity with our Master and each other through our not having learnt His lesson of the way of service, of our true relationship to our fellows?

Yet here and there across the pages of history shines the light of a good life pointing us the true way, and how by losing ourselves we find ourselves.

The bearing of the Cross which Jesus enjoined upon His followers is far other than that asceticism which monk and nun and Puritan have wasted many a precious life to attain. We have not to give

up the pleasant thing because it is pleasant, or because it gives only a mundane and transitory joy. Joy is good, and not to be avoided, but welcomed. We have to give up the pleasant thing ourselves, that others may take it in our stead; or give up a large measure of it that they may share it with us. We do not lose the joy, or pretend that it is unreal and transitory as the monk may. It is very real, and we feel it in a sense we could not do before, because our fellows share it or have it in place of us, and our life is their life. Gladness which they feel we must feel too.

This is the difference between the monk of the desert and Francis of Assisi, the apostle of the joy of Christ. The monk battles with himself to maintain his vow of poverty; he is constantly giving up in not possessing things for himself, or in renouncing pleasures which attract him. St. Francis in possessing nothing has all things, for all are God's and his fellows', and he is theirs. The wide world is his cloister, and everything which he can do to gladden his brother gives joy to himself. True Christianity like his is full of an infectious sense of the joy of life. Wherever such men go there comes to others some touch of their spirit, as crumbs drop from a full table.

This faith that joy in itself is good does not mean that there may not be needful for us all some form of true asceticism, training in withholding from things good in themselves and from pleasures we desire, quite apart from the surrender-

ing of them to others. But needful as this is, it is good only as training for an end beyond itself, and not for the mere sake of abstinence. We refrain that we may be masters of our wills, that we may keep control of habit, that our bodies may be the instrument of our spirits; such fasting as this only fits us more fully for the joy of service.

Deeper even than the sacrament of joy is that of sorrow, and we may learn something of it from John Woolman, the Quaker apostle of Christ's sufferings. Where men suffered he suffered too in spirit with them. When he came on his last journey to England he could not travel in the comfortable cabin because of the needless toil of the workmen that had gone to adorn it, but must share with the poor sailors the foul air and discomfort of the steerage. And when on the stormy passage across the Atlantic he lay there sick and in pain, his heart went up in thankfulness that he was permitted to share the experience which so many of his fellow-men had to go through, and be united thus to suffering humanity. "I was now desirous," he tells us, "to embrace every opportunity of being inwardly acquainted with the hardships and difficulties of my fellow-creatures, and to labour in His love for the spreading of pure righteousness on the earth." Then we shall remember, too, that beautiful passage near the close of his journal, where he recalls the vision that came to him in time of sickness of that mass of dull, gloomy colour, made up of

This is a part of Quaker Mysticism embodied in Woolman to which I cannot wholly subscribe save in the original Greek meaning of "Sympathy" not mere fellow-feeling, but "Suffering along with" in order to find the Rieberian Joy

human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and how he was told that he was mixed with them and henceforth might not consider himself a separate being. The angel's song, "John Woolman is dead," sounded to him more pure and lovely than any he had ever heard before, for in truth his old will was dead, and in him the spirit of Christ was alive.

Is it not here that the Church will find the way to reconcile the world of toilers and sufferers estranged from her to-day?—in that unity between her members which goes deeper even than membership, in a love to Christ which shows itself, as He calls for it, towards all who have need of Him, which identifies the Christian with his brothers, the doers and bearers of wrong?

As we look out upon a Christendom divided by sects and creeds into a score of different bodies, we may be saddened by the lament which many a devout lip has uttered over the schisms which rend the mystic robe of the Master. But it was only His outer garments which the soldiers rent asunder: the seamless robe is unsevered still. External separation does not touch the spirit of love and true communion which beneath countless outer differences unites together the lives of all who follow Him in deed and in truth. And as we each draw nearer to Him, and His life flows into our lives, we must draw nearer to each other and to all our fellow-men.

Another typical paragraph of Hankey's sheer idealism,

Cf. "The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain."

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHET IN THE CHURCH.

For the individual and the community alike the deepest influences are expressed in life rather than words, yet it remains true that through the symbols of spoken thought life must again and again come to expression. In former days this was realised in the value set upon prophecy, if we may use the word in its broadest and highest sense, as the forth-telling, in the language of human thought, of the Divine will present behind our lives and at work amid the world.

One of the changes that strike one most in organized Christianity to-day, compared with the Church of earlier times, is the general absence of prophecy in this sense, in all but very occasional crises. The prophetic instinct is not dead indeed, but men find its highest manifestations rather outside the Church than within it. The leaders of the Church have been too often content to repeat the messages of the prophets of a former day rather than to seek for a living voice within their midst. Yet those who know anything of the life of the Church from within, judged not merely by this incomplete

expression, but seen as it affects the daily lives of countless men and women, must surely agree that in spite of all the trammels of convention and tradition the Church has still a life to pass on and a message to deliver for the needs of to-day. Those who would have it become once more the school of the prophets will surely be willing to look for a few moments at the picture which has come down to us of what place prophecy filled in the Church life of the earliest days, and how the prophet was supplanted, not killed, as some have thought, by the priest, but rather silenced by the iron grip of organization.×

Read it in connection with Chap 13

In the fourteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians is preserved for us a picture of the meetings of an early Christian Church, full of interest to the historian.

It is clear from this description that an important part was usually taken in these gatherings by men who gave to their fellow worshippers what they believed to be God's message or revelation to them. This was something quite distinct from the recitation of a hymn or a passage of Scripture, or from the interpretation of scripture, or again from the teaching of doctrine. It is regarded by the Apostle Paul as the highest spiritual gift, one earnestly to be desired, although it was not given to all, but only to some. Of the nature of this ministry we get a glimpse in his description of the way in which an unbeliever who enters the assembly is convinced by it.

× Did I ever tell you the story of the canary and the elephant? If not, tell me, and I will; it emphasizes this point beautifully

The ministry goes to his inmost self, reading the needs of his heart.

"If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."*

The message of prophecy is one, as it seems, which reaches the subconscious self of the incomer, who suddenly beholds the realities of his own inner life in this flood of light that flows in upon him, piercing through the veil that custom and convention had wrought about him. But the prophetic word does not merely give this fuller knowledge of his own nature to the stranger; it puts him also into touch with a higher self. He sees in the flash of revelation not only the evil in his own life, but the source of a power to set it right, here in the midst of this assembly, and bowing himself before it he confesses the Divine Presence.

If we ask how this prophetic ministry is conceived as coming to those who exercise it, it would seem from the words of the Apostle that it is not by exercise of the intellect that prophecy comes, though the understanding is to be cultivated in connection with another highly prized gift, that of teaching. But the Corinthians are urged to long after the gift of prophecy most of all; they

* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

are to prepare themselves for it, then, by prayer, the door through which our life opens out into the Divine life and is fed from it. The teacher thinks over what he knows of the needs and difficulties of his fellows, ponders over the truths that have been made clear to him in the past, searches amongst the sayings of the Lord, the teachings of the Apostles, the words of the Law or the prophets of old, for help for the present. Not so the prophet. He may, indeed, go through all this preparation of thought, but the essential preparation for his work is prayer ; prayer in which he must be willing to lay aside, if need be, all these thoughts of this. The prophetic spirit reaches out to realize the condition of those to whom it is to minister, and upward in search of light and strength from its only source.

Sometimes it is not given to the prophet to reach conscious hold of Him by whom we are all upheld, and then all his ministry may be but a cry for help, with a deep sense of need. Sometimes he feels the presence very near, and as he keeps close to the Father's hand, those about him are given to feel it too.

Or, perhaps, some word of the Lord, or some thought of other days is suddenly illumined by a fresh light, and his message is to hand on the fire from the altar, that those about him may light their torches too.

The prophet is God's spokesman. He must lose thought of himself in his message. He is

translating for others and to others in the presence of the Giver of the message. He must keep in touch with those to whom he is speaking. He must remember too how easy it is for interpreters to expand and embroider upon the original, and thus to mar it. And, therefore, the prophet should keep very close to the Giver of the message, who may have given to others its fuller exposition.

One danger of the prophets of Corinth was very present to St. Paul's mind.

Some of them seem to have got so wrapt up in a sense of the Divine communion that they did not keep that control of their whole nature, which would lead them to find expression in the language of intelligence. Carried away by their feelings they gave utterance to the experience of their spirit in words broken and unintelligible, the channels of word and thought over which their brains had control seemed too small for the flood of emotion which swept out in overmastering power, so that their tongues moved and they spoke without knowing what they said. Paul knew better than any of them the hidden things of the Spirit, the groanings that cannot be uttered, the thoughts that flash upon us and cannot be caught up by our halting reason, following slowly after, the strivings of the soul that no words can compass, the God-given intuitions which cannot be imprisoned in words.

I think we both know much of what this means

But he knew too that language was given us not for the joy of expressing what we feel but as

a means of sharing our experience with others. To speak with an unknown tongue, to abandon oneself to the ecstasy of the moment, may be right for our own life, he writes, but it is useless for our fellows. We must not be content to soar up ourselves into the world of life and light, we must try to bring back into our world of sense some symbols of the truths of the world beyond, imprisoning in words which men may understand fragments of the truths which can never wholly be expressed in words.

At times the message burns so within the prophet's breast that he feels he must speak, no matter what is happening about him. Thus it seems that sometimes at Corinth two or three prophets would speak at once, and mar each other's messages. But this was to lose sight of their true place, to forget that the message was given them that others might receive it.

The prophet, he writes, is still master of his own spirit: he is not to allow his reason to lose its right control. He has to use his intelligence in deciding when he is to speak and when he must hold silence. He has not to let his conscious self be submerged in the sub-conscious, like an island beneath the waves of the surrounding sea; rather is he to gather on to its dry land the goods the waves have brought him, before he sends them forth again to other shores. In this way may the Divine message not only bring help to him but comfort to all to whom it is sent.

Thus the picture of the Church of Corinth and St. Paul's advice for its needs is one to which men may look who are seeking to-day for that true prophetic ministry which seemed to the Apostle the most important of the gifts of the Spirit to the Christian Church.

It may help us too to consider how far that gift has been present throughout the succeeding ages, and how far it has been hindered by the Church from finding its true exercise.

When next we get a glimpse of the Church at Corinth, more than a generation has passed away, and probably few of those who were members when St. Paul wrote are still alive. The majority of the church is in disagreement with its Elders or Bishops, and has deposed them from their positions; and the Bishop of Rome, Clement, writes in the name of his church, in reply to some letter from the Corinthians, to urge them to be reconciled, and give once more the honour that is their due to these worthy presbyters. The first epistle of Clement is a long and beautiful letter, and enters with tact and deep concern into a discussion of the dissension that is troubling the peace of the Corinthians, but it makes no mention whatever of the place of prophecy in the Church. The word prophet does occur twice in the epistle, but only in reference to the Old Testament.

At the same time it is clear that Clement is very sensible of the importance of the position of

the bishops or presbyters, though it is not quite clear whether these are wholly distinct offices.

Apparently the Church at Corinth was trying, in the spirit of Greek democracy, to dispense with its church officers. Clement tells them* how the Apostles went about setting up bishops and deacons amongst the first fruits of their converts in different cities; these offices had even been foreseen ages before, he notes, by the prophet Isaiah (lx. 17).†

It was not right, he urges, that men who had been appointed by the apostles and afterwards by other men of renown, with the consent and approval of the whole Church, who had fulfilled their duties without blame, should now be cast out of their offices.

If we turn to another group of letters, written some twelve years later by Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom at Rome, we find, again, that the only references to prophets and prophecy deal with old Testament days, but that the greatest importance is set by Ignatius upon the relations of the Church to its Bishop: "Do all of you," he bids the Church of Smyrna,‡ "follow the Bishop, as Jesus Christ the Father, and follow the College of Presbyters as the Apostles, and give heed to the deacons as God's commandment. Let no man do anything of those things that appertain

* xlii. 4, 5.

† Καταστήσω τοὺς ἐπισκόπους αὐτῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τοὺς διακόνους αὐτῶν ἐν πίστει.

‡ *ad* Smyrn. viii. 1, 2.

to the Church apart from the Bishop. Let that Eucharist be accounted valid that is under the authority of the Bishop or of him to whomsoever he himself entrusts it. Wheresoever the Bishop appeareth there let the multitude be, even as wheresoever Christ Jesus is there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful apart from the Bishop either to baptise or to hold an Agape, but whatsoever he approves that is also well pleasing to God; that all that is done may be safe and valid." (According to present Catholic doctrine even a woman may validly baptize.)

We see at once that it would not be easy to fit into such an ordered Church as this prophets like those of the earliest Church in Corinth.

But while in most of the larger towns the churches had been developing along lines like these it would seem that at the same time there were out of the way places in which a much more primitive tradition was preserved.

We can get some idea of this from the passages in the Didache which refer to prophets and travelling apostles.

Two whole chapters of this ancient book of teaching (xi. and xiii.) are devoted to this subject, whereas only the briefest mention is made of bishops and deacons, and in these words, "Elect then for yourselves bishops and deacons, worthy of the Lord, men gentle and not money loving, true and tested, for they too themselves offer to you the service of the prophets and teachers;

"Despise them not then, for these are they who are honoured of you along with the prophets and teachers."

Thus it would seem that the bishops and deacons are chosen by the Church for its work, perhaps in default of sufficiency of prophets and teachers, to do the work which these would do, and they seem at least to need, in the writer's eyes, to be supported by an appeal which he would not think of making on behalf of the prophet and teacher whose messages carry within themselves their authority. That the true prophet stands, in his eyes, above the human ordering of the church, seems clear too, from the section which gives instructions as to the words (and very beautiful words they are too) of the eucharistic prayer (ch. x.). At the conclusion of this model prayer the writer adds: "but allow the prophets to offer thanks as much as they choose."

Warning of almost naïve simplicity is given against dangers from false prophets. Apparently the temptation to emotional enthusiasm is not before the writer's mind, as it was before Paul's in writing to Corinth. The travelling evangelist, or apostle, as he is called, is to be received "as the Lord," but if he stay for as long as three days he is to be recognised as a false prophet. The readers are warned not to judge the prophet who speaks in the spirit, this being treated as the sin against the Holy Ghost.

"But not every man who speaks in the spirit

is a prophet," the writer goes on, "but only if he have the ways of the Lord,"—thus making the character of Christ the objective standard by which prophets are judged.

"From their ways then shall the false prophet and the prophet be known, and every prophet who appoints a feast in the spirit does not eat of it, unless, indeed, he be a false prophet, and every prophet who teaches the truth, if he does not do that which he teaches, is a false prophet." The readers are warned against judging the prophet who does some strange symbolic act for the edification of the Church without bidding others to do as he does, "for even thus also did the ancient prophets." "But whoso saith in the spirit Give me money, or any other things, to him ye shall not hearken; but if he speak concerning others who are in need, and bids men give, let no man judge him" (ch. xi.). The true prophet who is willing to settle amongst them is worthy of his keep, they are told, and so is the true teacher; "and so," the writer continues, "ye shall take every first-fruit of the produce of your wine-press and threshing floor, of your oxen and of your flocks, and shall give to the prophets, for they are your high priests.

"But if ye have not a prophet give to the poor; and so likewise with bread, oil and wine, with money, clothes and all other things" (ch. xiii.).

Here we have, perhaps, the hint of a transitional stage between the early church of Corinth and the churches of Clement and Ignatius. The prophet

has the first place of honour and next to him the teacher, but all churches have not their prophet, and in these bishops and deacons must act in the place of prophets and teachers, and be honoured as such, while in other churches the prophets and teachers were treated as a sort of Christian priest, and one may see how their work came to be regarded as a regular church office and gradually assimilated, in church after church, to the offices customary in the larger congregations like Rome and Antioch. As time passes the place of the prophet is more and more taken by the bishop, and by the end of the second century it would seem, that, for such a bishop of the Church Catholic as Apollinaris of Hierapolis, the prophet was a memory of the distant past.

The Montanist movement in Phrygia had owed its strength to the appeal which it made to the prophetic tradition and the prophetic spirit. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the Phrygian convert Montanus had gone into prophetic ecstasies which shocked the more orderly members of the church, and a separation ensued, in which Montanus was joined by two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla ; they continued for some time, it would seem, to appeal to those within the greater church to recognise them, for a fragment of Maximilla which is preserved to us, runs thus :

" I am chased like a wolf from the flock ; I am no wolf, I am utterance, spirit and power " (Eusebius v. § 16).

Some, like Tertullian, listened ; but the Church, as a whole, was frightened at the excesses of their enthusiasm and probably, as a result, prophecy became more than ever suspect. Irenæus, it is true, mentions amongst the Divine gifts still given to Christians in his day, that some have the knowledge of things to come, as also visions and prophetic communications (Eus. v. §7), but this certainly does not imply any frequent and general gift like that in the early church of Corinth.

His contemporary Alcibiades, indeed, writes a book to demonstrate the impropriety of a prophet's speaking in ecstasy, which Apollinaris abridged (Eus. v. § 17). The good bishop of Hierapolis was very earnest in his attack against the Montanists: " They will never be able to show," he writes, " that any in the Old or New Testament were thus violently agitated and carried away in spirit. Neither will they be able to boast that Agabus or Judas or Silas or the daughters of Phillip or Ammia, in Philadelphia, or Quadratus or others, that do not belong to them, ever acted in this way.' It is very significant that the latest examples of eminent prophets in the Church here named, are Quadratus and Ammia. Ammia appears to be unknown to Eusebius, who alludes to her in this chapter as " one Ammia," but Quadratus he has mentioned in a previous book as a prophet contemporary with Ignatius, in these words : " Of those that flourished in these times Quadratus is said to have been distinguished for his prophetical gifts. There

Note the really tenuous basis on which the Catholic and thereby the Episcopal claims to "Apostolic Succession" are founded.

were many others also noted in these times who held the first rank in the apostolic succession" (iii. § 37); whether this Quadratus is to be identified with the philosopher who wrote an apology for Christianity to Hadrian (iv. § 3) is uncertain.

It seems from the words of Apollinaris, which Eusebius goes on to quote (v. § 17), that the Montanists claimed that their prophets and prophetesses were the successors of Ammia and Quadratus, but Maximilla had now been dead for some years, and the bishop challenges his opponents to point to any living prophet who had succeeded her: "And if you have no succession of prophets then," he urges, "you must give up your claim to represent the Christian Church. (For the apostle shows that the gift of prophecy shall be in all the church until the coming of the Lord)." What would have been the bishop's answer if the Montanists had turned on him with the demand that he, too, should produce his living prophets within the pale of the great church? In view of what he has told us, may we not believe that his answer would be somewhat on this wise: "The gift of prophecy has never been removed from the church; though it may be dormant as far as such prophecies as those of Quadratus are concerned, it may be called forth again at any time by the Divine will, and will be recognised at once by the bishops, who are the divinely appointed authorities, without whose approval no true prophet will act. And if there be no such prophets

Note the skilful casting of a reply

now, in any church, the bishop takes their place, expounding as is fit the will of the Lord to the people, and guided himself by the Holy Spirit"? How are we to explain this remarkable change that we have thus witnessed, and was it the necessary and right development of the Church which led to it?

To those who know how, in the seventeenth century, another experiment was begun, which after nearly nine generations, is not yet ended, in the holding together of religious communities of which an essential feature has always been the freedom of prophesying, it may, at first sight, seem easy to reply that the change was no necessary one.

One would not say that they were wrong, for who can say what might not have been, if men had only been faithful to their highest ideals, and been willing always to take the rough and narrow way that leads straight up to the heavenly city? But we shall, perhaps judge more fairly if we think how very much greater were the difficulties that beset the Christian organisms of the first and second centuries, than those, great as they were, with which George Fox had to grapple. He had, it is true, to deal with companies of men and women, amongst whom were enthusiasts or individualistic quietists, who would brook no discipline, and many of them were poor and very ignorant folk; but how different in many cases was a church of the first century. Imagine a

community of varying nationalities, containing a number of slaves, many of them illiterate people, others degraded by their past life to the lowest depths; men and women rescued from lives of terrible evil and still under constant temptation to fall back; a number of Christian Jews with strange oriental customs and traditions, half-familiar only with the language and civilisation of their adopted town; a few men, possibly, of higher social position and greater education, but the majority only able to communicate with each other by a lingua franca of bad Greek, which was the native tongue only of a small minority. One can see what a babel of confusion might easily arise amongst such a community, especially when we remember that many had but an imperfect knowledge of Christ and His teaching, and very few churches possessed all the works which we have in our New Testament.

Moreover, a great change had come from the days of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. That little church was then still living in the days when the Christians as such were tolerated by the law. Gallio's decision had removed the church at Corinth from any need to observe secrecy.

But after two generations the position had wholly changed, and to be a Christian was a penal offence which, if adhered to, was punishable with death. This necessarily involved a need for greater precaution, for more order and wise management in the assembling of the Church.

And in the early days when the churches lived in constant expectation of the immediate end of the age and the outward coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom, they would naturally lay little stress on church order ; the struggle of the church militant was but to last a brief time more ; there was no need for much organisation, or for any other connection between one church and another than the friendly ties of love. One church might have its prophets and teachers, another only presbyters or a bishop and deacons ; others of larger size and needs might have all these officers together with deaconesses and widows. But no one was anxious about such differences. Travelling apostles and evangelists formed living links of love betwixt church and church, and occasionally, individuals and churches sent letters to each other. No other bond was needed.

But when it became slowly more evident that the Church might yet have to continue long years at work in the world before the consummation came, and when it seemed to the leaders that they had to fight a life and death struggle, on the one hand against the vast force of the world empire of Rome, whenever a persecuting edict might be enforced, and on the other against a growing crowd of strange errors, which seemed to them to be sent by the Devil to delude the hearts of the faithful, and draw them away from the Gospel of Christ ; can we wonder that they did their best to draw the scattered communities of

Christians to a sense of unity under a like organization, adapted for a strenuous fight to preserve the good order of the Church from being shattered by persecutions from without or broken up and corrupted by false or mistaken brethren from within.

And often, too, especially under the fire of persecution, something of the true prophetic spirit showed itself in the bishops themselves, as they admonished their fellow believers to be faithful even unto death, and beheld, amidst the shadow of death, visions of the deep things of God. Very true is this of Ignatius, whose letters breathe forth again and again the fiery faith and zeal of the true prophet, with flashes now and then of great and Christlike thoughts that still shine like gems amid the dust of pious exposition and mistaken exegesis that even first century Christian literature shares as a characteristic with our own. In the letter which he wrote to his friend Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, one sees how intensely he felt the importance of a bishop's work for the life of the Church, how great the need was for gifted and holy men to fill such posts and what true help such men were able to give to the struggling communities for whom they lived and whom they served. Ignatius, for all his exaltation of the bishop's office, is full of humanity, feeling his own unworthiness and regarding himself as the servant of his church. As we hear him urging upon Polycarp to do his best to save all his flock, to put up with them all, even as Christ bears with

him, to love not just the good disciples but rather more especially the worse, and to conquer them by gentleness, to stand like a rock against false teaching, to care for the widows and not to overlook the slaves, we feel indeed how high the task of such a bishop was ; and with both Ignatius and Polycarp, as with countless of their less illustrious fellows, it was a task crowned by martyrdom.

But if history shows us how valuable was the work done under the system of the catholic hierarchy to preserve a living Christianity across the centuries, it also bears witness to the way in which in succeeding ages the prophetic spirit re-asserted itself. A long series of heresies from that of the Montanists in the second century to that of the Fraticelli in the fourteenth, or of the Lollards and Hussites in the fifteenth, up to the days of the Reformation and the Anabaptist prophets of Munster, give us evidence of the way in which that spirit meets the profound need of humanity and proves the outcome of deep stirring of soul. But inside the Church itself we shall find again that the spirit of prophecy cannot be banished, just because there always was true life there. Yet the prophetic gift does not go along the orthodox channels of the hierarchy, but is continually bursting out in new and unexpected quarters, so that often the authorities of the Church are in a strait whether they are dealing with a saint or a heretic. To those outside the Church, the canon sometimes seems strange enough which

rules into one class St. Theresa, into the other Madame Guyon, which, after burning Savonarola was almost on the point of canonising him, which deposed and exiled John of Parma, and then beatified him. The prophetic spirit surely often found its outlet in the early ages amongst the monks of the desert, witness for instance such a saint as Telemachus, who brought to an end the gladiatorial shows at Rome; and in later times first in the Benedictine and the subsequent monastic orders, and then, very notably, in the Franciscan brotherhood, it found freer outlets than the church of the day could provide, while the lives of countless saints bear witness to some touches at least of the spirit of the prophet reasserting itself in spite of the trammels of the organization of the church. If the gift of prophecy were to be connected with a divinely ordered hierarchy we might naturally look for it most of all in the popes. Yet in so many centuries comparatively few popes have been canonised as saints, and few amongst these are conspicuous as showing forth this gift in the way in which we see it in such a simple woman as Catherine of Siena, or in plain men like Giles of Perugia.

In our own day, a devout catholic like Fogazzaro has pictured for us the way in which a true prophet may arise within the bosom of the Church, only to meet with obstacles from the authorities, and finally with persecution ending almost in martyrdom. Yet that book, which, in spite of

Papal prohibition, has found such warm support and awakened such eager interest in Catholic Italy, bears witness to the profound longing (which many in England surely share) that there is within the orthodox Church for a deep spiritual ministry, which the recognised authorities have not always supplied, for a revelation of new truth to meet the needs of our day, for a fresh unfolding of the meaning of the gospel of Christ, which shall appeal once more with apostolic power to the hearts of men.

Two centuries ago the early Quakers felt that they had known such an experience and tried to hand it on to others. Need we wonder if it should appear that the Society of Friends to-day has inherited their traditions but not their spirit? For, indeed, the prophetic spirit can never be inherited, or passed on from man to man by any mechanical arrangement. It must come anew from generation to generation, often after the hardest travail of soul, through fresh strivings, as the result of other needs; but we can, at least, see that our ordering, whether of the Church's life or our own, is such as not to hinder its coming but to prepare us for it.

And not the least of such a heritage has been a form of worship and a view of life which may still give not only to a little community but to a wider world a school of the prophets.

When we see the weak side of quietism, and mistakes of an earlier day of mystics (as now we

are so apt to do), let us not forget that, amidst the quietist Quakerism of the eighteenth century, there grew up and flowered one of the most beautiful products not only of Quaker but of Christian training; to many of us to-day, John Woolman speaks as do few others with the power of a true prophet. Yet too often in the past the Society of Friends has been content with a succession of minor prophets, whose message was only to a little congregation. Without was a multitude who had no priests or shepherds, and nations needing a guide. To-day, if we cannot make teachers like Woolman, at least we can prepare the way for their coming.

Prophecy is born of prayer, supported by it, not the prayer of words, but that attitude of soul, of will, of which the most beautiful of our collects are the momentary reflections. In this spirit then, feeling our need and our fellows', let us long for more light to come into our lives. Let us remember that we have not just to sit down contentedly in the dark and wait for God's light.

If we try to listen to the voice of the prophet teachers of the past whose message still comes home to us, and to picture the thoughts of some disciple of theirs to-day, might we not frame them thus?—

"If we cannot scatter the clouds, we can at least clean our windows and open our doors. Every faculty of our nature is God's gift and to be used in His service, and so we are not to think of prophecy

as coming with the atrophy of the intellect; with every power of our minds we are called to serve God and seek truth, which is His revelation. To pray, 'Thy will be done' should be, as Fogazzaro has told us, no attitude of passive submission, but a call to our whole nature to strive to the utmost for the cause of God.

"Then we must remember that the more truly we are at one with Christ, the more we shall feel ourselves fundamentally united with all our fellows. We shall feel their wrongs and sins as ours, and their needs too, and as we come to feel this, we shall realise more and more that in every act and word and thought we are not our own.

"Every evil desire overcome is a victory for our brothers, and not merely for ourselves. Our lives are intertwined one with another, and constantly, unseen and unknown to ourselves and each other, we influence one another for evil or for good. The prophet is nothing else than a true priest, not to one or two, but to a multitude.

"We are all called to be priests, and, if God calls us to be prophets, in learning to be truly priests, we shall unconsciously be learning too in the prophets' school.

"The priest must have a two-fold vision, of the truth above him and of the brother beside him who has need of the truth. The more he can see of either, the more he can be brought into communication with his fellows, and with the truth, the more priestly will his service be.

" Let us be faithful in word and deed to the highest that we know, and higher things shall be revealed unto us. Let us be patient with the worst and those who naturally repel us. Far more repulsive has been the evil in our own thoughts in the eyes of the holy angels. Let us not be uplifted because others have been helped through us ; Truth is not ours, but God's.

" Let us not be discouraged if our work seem fruitless ; never despair of the truth. Have faith in the truth that has been revealed to you, for some day others too shall see it.

" Have faith in the Truth that is yet unknown ; others perhaps have already caught some glimpse of it.

" Blessed is the man in whose heart there is built an altar with the inscription written : ' To the unknown Truth ' ; of such men are prophets made.

" Truth is beautiful in the mouth of a friend, but most divine when it is seen in the heart of an opponent. The devil had delight to seek for faults in Job ; let us seek rather to see, with Christ, the good in the heart of the publican."

Those of us who are striving after this ideal should be the greatest of sacerdotalists ; our faith and worship are built up upon belief in the essential priesthood of every human soul. Let us not forget then, that if all men have some vision of God, all may teach us something of Him. And since heavenly truth comes to no man naked, but clad in changing robes, let us strive in our

search for truth, alike in speaking and in listening, to remember that the garment of words changes and may mean one thing to us and another to our fellows. Let us get beneath words and forms to the life-giving spirit, and as we are to be the greatest sacerdotalists let us be the most thorough-going of ritualists too, to whom there are symbols and lessons of the Divine Life, not only in the beautiful liturgies of the altar, but in all the mysteries of nature and the sacraments with which life is full.

For surely there are not merely two or seven sacraments, but seventy times seven, for him whose heart seeks ever fellowship with his brothers and with the Father above him, who would be loved in them, and served by their service. The whole world is God's and full of His light; our lives are His and they are our fellows. And since in every heart of man is some well through which the God-given waters of life may flow, we may go forth in faith to our work; as we serve our neighbours and search for truth, in the spirit of followers of Christ Jesus, seeking that our own wells may be made wider and deeper, and that their springs may be shared more fully by others, God will make priests of all of us, and, if He will it, prophets too.

CHAPTER IV.

SACRAMENTS OF LIFE.

"THE Finger of God," wrote once Sir Thomas Browne, "hath left an inscription upon all His works." We have little skill to read that wondrous message, but from the very dawn of humanity men have tried to trace the writing, have sought to spell out the words, and as they came to perceive something of those spiritual forces that are at work in the world, and to look beneath the surface of things to that which lies deeper, they too have endeavoured to embody in outward forms for themselves and for others the truths which they would apprehend.

The course of the ages changes the meaning of even the simplest words which we use, for words, like men, are mortal; and so it has come about that the thought which rises in our minds as we speak of a sacrament is not that which came to those who used the word long ago.

In the ancient days a sacrament was simply a holy thing, something consecrated and set apart; in very early times it was especially a sort of judicial pledge deposited by the parties in a law

suit; then it came to mean the solemn oath of a soldier, pledging his loyalty to his commander on entering upon his military service. It was used by early Christian Latin writers to render the thought of the Greek mystery, μυστήριον, a word which we have failed to translate into English, as so often we must fail in any translation from one tongue to another to render thought for thought.

We think nowadays of a mystery as being something hidden, but to the Greek it was rather a revelation; an unfolding through symbol of that which could not be wholly expressed in any words. The mystery remained a secret to him who was without, to the uninitiate; but the initiate understood its meaning.

In the most famous mysteries of Greece, those which were celebrated at Eleusis, it would seem that along with the idea of revelation of truth went also the sense of upbuilding of the inward life, the purification of the soul and the assimilation of the Divine things imparted beneath the symbol. For revelation, the unveiling of truth, is no one-sided act; it involves response in the mind that receives; if the truth is apprehended, it must in part at least, be also assimilated. And so every mystery is something more than the unfolding of a hidden reality; it also implies the imparting of new life.*

* The earliest Latin versions of the Bible seem often to have used the word sacramentum to translate the Greek

In the earlier Christian literature sacraments still bear this wide meaning. Tertullian often uses the word thus. In one passage he speaks of a woman known to him who was accustomed to go into ecstasies during the weekly service of the Church; "she converses with angels, sometimes even with the Lord, and both sees and hears sacraments"* He speaks of "the sacrament of allegory,"† "sacraments of metaphors,"‡ in both cases alluding to Old Testament types, and again, he explains the wood by which Moses made the waters of Mara sweet (Exodus xv.), as a sacrament symbolizing the cross: §

According to Prudentius, the early Christian poet, the Evangelist tells us that Christ gave these

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μυστήριον. Thus in St. Matthew xiii. 11, in reply to the disciples' query "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" is given the response "To you is given to know the sacraments of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given" (Cod. Bobbiensis).

Even the Vulgate retains this rendering in a number of passages (Eph. i. 9; iii. 3; v. 32; Revelation i. 20), and one cannot help wishing that our English version might have retained so beautiful a rendering as "the sacrament of His will," or the reference to the mystical union of Christ and His church as "the great sacrament." Similarly, it is interesting to hear the Vulgate speak of "the sacrament of the seven stars," in the Apocalypse, and to read in 1 Tim. iii. 16, "great is the sacrament of godliness."

* De Anima, ix.

† Adv. Marcion, v. 4.

‡ Adv. Marcion, v. i.

§ "*Hoc enim lignum tunc in sacramento erat*" (Adv. Judaeos, xii.).

commands to His disciples: "Seek not carefully for words when ye shall have to descant of my sacrament,"* "my Sacrament," being evidently here equivalent to "the Gospel."

But, as time passed by, the word sacrament became more and more used for certain mysteries of the Church alone, although far down into the middle ages even in this sense the word had a wider use than that of the seven sacraments of the Council of Trent.

Thus in 393 A.D. the synod of Hippo made a decree as to the use of the sacrament of salt at Easter by the catechumens, and in later times the ringing of bells and the use of the sign of the cross were regarded as sacraments. By the time of Augustine, however, the word sacrament was frequently used in its narrower signification, and already emphasis is laid on the saving power of the sacrament rather than on its significance as a revelation. Yet Augustine, though holding that the sacrament of baptism was necessary to salvation, once wrote thus: "For what else are each of the bodily sacraments, but, so to speak, certain visible words; most holy words it is true, but yet mutable and temporal ones?"†

It is this wider sense of the word which we must

* "*Nolite verba, cum sacramentum meum erit canendum, providenter quaerere.*"

† "*Quid enim sunt aliud quaeque corporalia sacramenta nisi quaedam quasi verba visibilia sacrosancta quidem, veruntamen mutabilia at temporalia?*" (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum.*, Lib. xix. Cap. 16.).

be careful not to lose, the use in which a sacrament means the unfolding and imparting of the spiritual and eternal through that which we see and hear and feel.

Because in times past the Church has tended to narrow the use of the word, and, by confining the Divine operations to certain channels, to misread the great sacrament of life, so lessening the mystery of the world, there is all the more reason that we should not rest content with seeing how inadequate such views have proved. It is true that over the doctrine of sacraments men have fought and wrangled, forgetting the name by which they were called. But it is true, too, that to countless souls it has seemed that through the sacraments the Church has offered them help which has come as in no other way to their lives. And surely this has not been all delusion. The error of the sacramentalist in the past has often rather been that he has confined the Divine presence and the Divine working to certain fixed channels and unchanging visible signs. Those of us who hold that these good men have narrowed down the freedom of the inner life need to meet them not by denying the Divine presence where they see it, but by trying to see and to realize that presence ourselves more fully throughout all our lives. We are called to the worship and the knowledge of the transcendent and immanent God, who is here in the midst of our lives, in the midst of His world and His works, yet is far more than all these.

When the stern old Tertullian looked out upon the pagan world around him and noted in its religious rites strange mimicry and rivalry of the Christian mysteries, he could perceive no good in what he saw. In the worship of Mithras he found a baptism for the remission of sins, and a sign made on the forehead of the soldier in this pagan army of salvation; a crown purchased by the sword, and the ritual offering of bread. But all this, like the ancient Roman rites of Numa, or the mysteries of Eleusis and of Samothrace, seemed to him but the work of the Evil One. It was the devil's part, he wrote, to invert the truth and make of it his own counterparts, as he seemed to do in much of the ritual of the heathen temple.*

In like manner, in more modern times the early missionaries in the far east learned with amazement of the way in which, in the mountains of Thibet, the devil had made his imitation of the ceremonies and offices of the Catholic Church, and wondered as they heard of the Buddhist monasteries with their abbots and hierarchy of clergy, and the celebration there of mysterious offices strangely resembling their own mass, to the sound of bells and amid the smoke of incense.

In our own day an even wider area opens before

* ("De Praescriptione Haereticorum" xl.) At his best, however, Tertullian, at least in one of his works, did seem to go farther than this, and to recognise in the instinctive strivings of natural religion the witness of the soul to the truths revealed in Christ ("De Testimonio Animae").

the historian's vision, and across five continents men trace, under various forms, rites whose origin seems the same. It is not now the devil who is credited with inspiring these myriad devices, but perhaps not a few of the students who return with Dr. Frazer from the survey of this vast field are inclined to feel that they have reduced all alike to one origin, in primitive savage superstition at work in the presence of life, birth and death. But if Tertullian and his school lack charity in their judgment on the sacraments of the heathen, there is surely danger too that our modern men of science may lead us to believe that in tracing a custom to its primitive origin they have found its cause or explained its nature. We can understand a thing best, not merely by knowing its beginning, but by also viewing it in its full development, judged not only by what it is at its lowest, or when it is most degraded, but at its highest and best.

The world-wide use points surely to a world-wide need, expressing itself in different ways, but in essentials the same. Unconsciously, indeed, in all our lives we make use of sacraments whenever we apprehend the invisible and the higher through the medium of the visible and lower. And, in our very thoughts, metaphors and symbols are nothing else than sacraments expressing truth in pictorial form. Even when men deliberately attempt to explain all life on a basis of atheistic materialism they still feel the need of what might

truly be called a kind of sacrament. It is very significant from this point of view to find that some French secularists have found it desirable to publish a ritual of civil ceremonies,* in which model liturgies are provided for a secular baptism, a secular confirmation service, as well as secular marriage and burial services. A conscious recognition of this same need led Auguste Comte and his Positivist followers to devise an elaborate ritual which might make their worship of Humanity more real.

The Society of Friends itself, which is popularly supposed to represent a protest against all forms of sacraments, can illustrate in its history the value of the true sacrament, and the danger there is of doing worship to the form of the sacrament, rather than to the life which makes it of worth.

No other Christian community has proved so strikingly the value in worship of the beautiful sacrament of silence, that universal liturgy in which all nations can unite; where ignorant and learned men come together on a like basis. Yet the very fact that in speaking of this we need to emphasize the worth of "Living silence," shows that too often, even here, men have but honoured a dead silence, making an idol of the sacrament which was only a means to an end, not an end in itself.

We may see even more clearly how easy it is for the form to become a bondage in the history of

* The "*Guide des cérémonies civiles*" (Par Lux, Paris, 1902).

another strange Quaker sacrament, that of the "Plain dress" of the middle nineteenth century. There is no need to tell how, in the case of this custom, the protest against changing fashions became itself the most tyrannous of fashions. What is especially interesting to us now, is to note that the dress which was an outward sign of inward grace became to be considered as, in a sense, holy itself. A young man or woman would wear the ordinary dress of the day, and suddenly some time of decision would come, a crisis in the inner life, and perfectly naturally the change would be marked by the adoption in the plain dress of the older generation. And it even became customary to associate the length of the hat brim with the holiness of the wearer's life; the truer to Quaker principles he was, the longer was the brim. It has been said that you may find in a journal written seventy years ago such an entry as this: "I think I can honestly, yet in all humility, say that in the past year there has been a growth in grace, and I have ventured to add a quarter of an inch to the brim of my hat." We smile; yet for some of us at least that ancient costume is so redolent of beautiful memories that we can scarce bear to laugh at its vagaries; we know too well the sacramental efficacy of the old Friend's bonnet, which forever recalls the goodness and love of the face beneath it.

It is strange that in the ancient Church of Rome men should have come to think in much the same

way of the peculiar habits of the religious orders, regarding the monk's dress itself as something sacred, which an unworthy man dishonoured, and which actually helped its wearer to be holier in his life just as the old Quaker dress was felt by many to help them to be more consistent in all their ways with the ideal which they strove to realize. So strong was this feeling that men who were not members of an Order sometimes obtained as a privilege to wear for a time the cord, to die in the habit, or even to be buried in it, the dress itself being felt to be sacramental.

If these minor sacraments came to be so misunderstood, how natural it is that similar misunderstandings should arise as to sacraments in common use throughout the whole Church, and associated with the very deepest truths of the inner life. Yet if we go back to their origin we shall see that the two chief sacraments of the Church were most simple acts expressing in visible language the life of the spirit, acts perfectly natural and full of significance to those who first took part in them, but which in later days have too often lost their meaning because the mere form was held to have some magical efficacy in itself.

To understand these sacraments aright do we not need to enter into the spirit of the Teacher in whose name they are celebrated, and who is believed to have instituted them? As we read the evangelists' record of the life and words of Jesus,

we must surely feel that to him all life was a sacrament, a continual unfolding of the Divine through the visible world and through human life. In his eyes the sunshine falling alike upon good and evil men is a constant revelation of the Divine love, compassing just and unjust, overcoming evil with good. The beautiful flowers of the field, blooming for a moment and then destroyed, bring to him no thoughts of gloom, as they did to the Greek poet, but the certainty that the Power which gives such loveliness to the creatures of an hour will provide for His higher creation too. The sparrows chirruping under the eaves, humblest of birds, fill him with a sense of the Father's care for these, and much more for man. As Christ walks across the fields, he sees messages for men in all the life about him : the parable of the seed, summing up the whole mystery of our nature in its life and growth ; the sower at his work, the fishermen at their task, all are parables for him. And so it is with the relationships of our human life, which Christ takes up in his teaching and makes sacramental. Because he is in unbroken communion with the Father unseen, he constantly brings all the little things of daily life into relationship with Him.

Christ found the religious folk of his day intent on fulfilling certain duties ; eager to guard the letter of the scriptures, the sacredness of the sabbath, and to fulfil the various acts which the law prescribed. He did not destroy the sacredness of

the one day by his treatment of the sabbath, but he raised the other days to its level: he did not secularize life by his attitude to the law, but rather recognised all life as holy. Religion was no longer to be something confined to certain acts and to special offices and places, but rather the attitude of the soul toward God and one's fellows, a spirit pervading the whole life and not concerned merely with the externals of duty or with certain special seasons of prayer.

Was it not natural, and even necessary, that One who looked thus upon the world, seeing everything in relation to God as the Author and the the end of life, should make of the commonest acts a means to the Source of all strength? The water of purification, without which men could not live a clean and healthy life, the daily bread without which they could not live at all, the wine which stood for the inspiring fellowship which makes life worth living, were symbols ready to hand and full of spiritual meaning.

We have a perfect instance, in the account given in the fourth Gospel of the washing of the disciples' feet, of the true nature of the sacrament, and we are able perhaps to see it more clearly because the actual form of this sacrament has never been in general use in the Church, and men have almost ceased to think of it as a sacrament at all. "Except I wash thee thou hast no part in me," the Master says to Peter; so necessary was the sacrament. Yet the mere form meant nothing, when the thought

and life beneath it was not entered into, for Judas too, submitted to the ordinance, and went out to betray his Lord. We are told how, when Christ had ended this visible parable, the disciples were bidden even so to wash each other's feet. Often possibly in after years one or another may have done a like act for his friend, and recalled the Master's words in doing it. But this sacrament never became fixed into a form, and so even now we can clearly see its meaning. Indeed, had it become a custom of the Church, Christians would have needed to have been very simple and humble if the ordinance were not to lose its significance. In the few instances where the rite of feet-washing is still observed, we see how far removed to-day the ceremony may be from the thought which once inspired it. The selected poor, who have first been carefully washed before the ceremony, are marshalled in stately order, attendant dignitaries are ready at hand with ewers of scented water and basins of precious metal; and so, yearly, do Pope and Emperor commemorate the scene in the upper chamber where in very different wise one whose kingdom was not of this world taught his followers the way they should serve him by serving one another.

The sacrament of baptism would seem to be one which comes naturally to the Eastern peoples: it has been in use for ages among the Hindus of India, and it was apparently in general vogue in Palestine in Christ's time. It would appear

to have been not so familiar to the Western world, for the evangelist Mark has to explain to his Gentile reader how it was the custom of the Pharisees to baptize pots and vessels, and even beds. Apparently, even in that day the symbol of purification had come to have a magical significance. The washing or purification as a symbol of initiation is common to many religions, and it was a natural pictorial language for the prophet John the Baptist to employ, to express the change of life that was to follow the repentance which he preached. Christ's disciples had, many of them, first been followers of John, and would readily continue to use this sign in their ministry. But though Baptism was to the early Church the natural expression of entrance into the new life of Christianity (as we see in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch), yet it is hard to imagine that if it were held to possess in itself the importance which in later time was attached to it, the Apostle Paul would actually rejoice in the fact that he had hardly baptized any converts at all himself.* Already, however, the ceremony had a meaning deeper than the simple act of purification severing the old life from the new, which was probably that of the first baptisms of the disciples during the lifetime of Christ. We gather from Paul's words that in baptism the believer made real to himself, and to those about him, his

* See 1 Cor. i. 14-15. "For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel."

going down with Christ into the waters of death and his rising again with him into a new life, by the power of the resurrection. Some inherent virtue was soon thought to attach to the outward act itself, or else one can scarcely explain the origin of that strange custom of baptism for the dead, alluded to in the same epistle.*

This thought of the inherent worth of baptism continued to grow until by the beginning of the fifth century it became generally held that without it salvation was impossible. The Christian conscience, however, discovered a way to remove what would have been the hardest application of such a belief by what was spoken of as the baptism of blood. If an unbaptized convert was martyred for the name of Christ (as often might happen), the martyr's death was held to be itself a baptism, and this idea was extended to what was called the baptism of desire, or the baptism of faith, whenever death occurred before it was possible for a convert to be baptized. The classical instance of this, discussed by St. Augustine and frequently cited by subsequent writers, is that of the penitent thief upon the cross.† And Tertullian, who called baptism the "seal of faith," goes so far as to say "we do not receive the washing of purification

* 1 Cor. xv.

† Aug. de Baptismo Lib. iv. Cyprian had instanced this this as a case of baptism of blood, but Augustine pointed out that the penitent thief suffered not as a Christian, but in punishment for a crime.

in order to cease from sinning, since we had already been washed in our hearts."* The seal of baptism was in his view the legal and visible completion of the act, not the act itself. Still, he holds baptism to be the needful "vesture of faith," as he calls it in another passage, and accordingly discusses the difficulty raised by some heretics of his own time, that Paul being the only baptized apostle, the other apostles could none of them be saved; though he does not feel it needful to adopt the explanation of certain orthodox ritualists of his day, who held, he tells us, that the apostles were possibly baptized on the occasion when the waves beat in upon them in the little ship on the sea of Galilee.

It was not to be wondered at that, with such a view of baptism current in the Church, the Catholic missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should have laid stress rather on the numbers whom they could baptize than any other result. It is indeed at once pathetic and amusing to turn over the leaves of the letters from the missions which the good Jesuit fathers wrote two centuries and more ago, describing the progress of their work among the American Indians. You may read there the words of a missionary spending laborious days amid all manner of hardships, baptizing the sick and aged when very near to death and therefore removed from the danger of possible relapse into infidelity, and especially

* De Poen, C. vi.; cf. xii. and xiii.

rejoicing in the number of souls won by the baptism of dying infants, who could not possibly fall away from grace.

To such almost ludicrous notions do men come through materialising the pictorial language of the primitive sacrament, and imagining that its visible words have magical efficacy in themselves. Yet the thought of the scene in the upper room on the night of the last supper makes us feel how much that visible language might mean in its first simplicity.

As simple and as natural was that other sacrament, when Christ took the bread from the supper table, and the cup of fellowship, and gave them to those friends of his as his body and very life, which he was giving for them and for their fellows. What could be more fitting than that they should henceforth remember this farewell supper, this supreme gift of himself, when their master was taken from their sight, whenever they partook again of the Passover, nay, whenever they met together as disciples to share in a common meal in the name of him they loved? The more fully they lived in his spirit the more simply would each meal they took with one another be hallowed by the thought of his love and his presence.

Thus did the disciples in the early days take together the Eucharist meal from house to house in Jerusalem: and so, in the midst of the storm, Paul took it, before wondering fellow-passengers and crew, mingling the prayer of joyful thanks-

giving with the remembrance of the Lord for whose name he was suffering hardship.

Already in the time of Paul the communion service was beginning to lose its first simple spontaneity, as we may note in his directions to the Church at Corinth, but for long afterwards the Eucharist was in a much wider sense sacramental, than when its meaning was defined and imprisoned in the formulae of theologians. How full of beauty must the eucharist have been in those little churches of Asia Minor,* for which perhaps the Didache, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," was written, towards the beginning of the second century. The eucharist prayer of the Didache is a true prayer of thanks: "We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou didst make known to us through Thy servant Jesus; Unto Thee the glory evermore!" "For as this broken piece of bread was scattered over the mountains and brought together and became one, so may Thy church be brought together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom, for Thine is the glory and the power through Christ Jesus evermore."

Thus was the eucharist meal to early Christians a sympol of the unity of the Church, and a means of drawing them nearer in thought to each other.

* It is more generally held at present by scholars that the Didache was written in Egypt; but would not this prayer rather befit the hilly country of Phrygia, where afterwards Montanus taught?

It is sad to think that what in those days was a bond of union should have become in later times a source of bitter contention and misunderstanding; may we not resolve that for our part, however we may differ from each other, or from the majority of Christians, in our views about this observance, we will not let this hinder us from realizing that others may be helped by means which do not aid us, and that it is infinitely better to draw near to God through outward forms than to be without them and not to draw near to Him: that what we need is to realize and to claim the liberty by which a hundred forms may become sacramental, and not to deny the reality of the life which may underlie the fixed forms which others use.

Luther once said that God might have made a sacrament of a bit of stick, had He chosen; Pusey repeated the saying to a friend with a shudder, telling him that it showed an irreverent mind.* Yet surely Luther's words convey the very key to our comprehending the truth of the Real Presence, which may be revealed without outward form, or under innumerable forms, just because God is so much nearer than we think, ever at work in His world, still disclosing Himself to those who seek with humble heart, even though they call Him not by His name. What we need above all is the spirit which will fill our lives with such sacraments, revelations of God to us and to our fellows. Sometimes we may be helped by an

* Rev. W. Tuckwell: "Reminiscences of Oxford."

ancient usage of the Church, at others by some new symbol: what matter the shape of the chalice if the wine be there?

John Henry Newman, in his early Protestant days, was wont to make use of the sign of the cross and to find it helpful. It is a sacrament which loses its meaning the moment one thinks of it as having any magical effect in itself, but if it be used to remind oneself of that which it stands for, as the symbol of the perfect deed of self-sacrifice, it may well help many learners in the school of Christ.

In like manner to-day, the wearing of a badge of membership in some society, or adult school (as twenty years ago a piece of blue ribbon), may doubtless prove an effectual sacrament to many men, aiding them to be faithful to a resolution made, as well as showing forth their belief to others. The sign is in itself useless, yet may mean much to the men who make it their symbol of comradeship.

The more worth living our lives prove, the fuller they will be of true sacraments, in little things and in great. The immense sacrament of nature is ever about us, and our human intercourse is made up, in all that makes it of worth, of countless lesser sacraments. What meaning there may be in a simple handshake, and how much help and strength it may pass on to another! The mere physical act is as nothing in itself, yet it may avail to alter a whole life. Nevertheless,

we must see even here how easily mere custom may diminish or destroy the use of such a thing. In the studied greeting of formal civility the sacramental character disappears. Or worse still, that which was intended to be a medium of friendship becomes a means of undoing friendship's work. For so long as wrong exists in our lives we must beware of the sacraments of evil by which the ties which bind us to each other and to the world about us become the Devil's bonds instead of God's leading-strings.

The act, or the thing which forms the sacrament, may be in itself used either for good or ill. To one man even it may be good, while to another it may be a means of harm. The greater need, therefore, have we neither to judge our neighbour, nor ourselves to do lightly things which may be a means of good for him, but for us a sacrament of ill.

To take a single instance: Wandering in his father's library, a boy comes upon a book which he begins to read; and suddenly the conviction comes to him that he ought not to go on. The book is full of interest; perhaps in later years he may return to it and find its thoughts most helpful. And yet it may be that this book, which at a later time might prove a sacrament of good, may be for him now nothing but a sacrament of evil, since his mind is not ready to understand its teaching.

In the world without us there are some things so constantly associated with thoughts of goodness

and beauty that they seem almost naturally God's sacraments. Such are the flowers, which constantly call to our minds thoughts of joy and kindness; the sunlight, which cheers and invigorates; and drives away the disease that is the symbol of wrongdoing; the light, whose essence is so pure that it has become an image of the Divine nature. These are among nature's sacraments, and in the life of man we have, above all, the sacrament of the family, which at its best is an image of the love of the All-highest, and a foretaste of His Kingdom among men, of the city which is to be, in which all are members of one another, living to serve each other.

It may comfort us to think that the devil's sacraments are not so all-pervading; for night, which we think of as the cloak of evil, may itself be to the devout soul a symbol of the mysterious peace of God. One thinks of those wonderful lines of Vaughan:

> Dear Night! the world's defeat;
> The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb;
> The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
> Which none disturb!
> Christ's progress, and His prayer-time;
> The hours to which high Heaven doth climb.

> God's silent, searching flight;
> When my Lord's head is fill'd with dew, and all
> His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
> His still, soft call;
> His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,
> When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted, as is thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice
Is seldom rent;
Then I in Heaven all the long year
Would keep, and never wander here.

* * * *

There is in God—some say—
A deep, but dazzling darkness; as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear.
O for that Night! Where I in Him
Might live invisible and dim!

or we may remember the "Hymns to Night" of Novalis, and that experience known to so many saints, which St. John of the Cross speaks of as "the obscure night of the soul," the darkness which we needs must traverse before we come to know the greater light beyond. The stern angel of pain seems to many a fiend; but some have found him to be a friend at the last, and certainly there is something in the heart of sorrow that no other experience brings to us, unless it be great joy, and as we feel it, we seem to understand that the spirit of joy and the spirit of sorrow are angels near akin.

In the world that man has made there is one thing above all others through which the influences of evil seem to work,—the devil's sacrament of money. When one thinks of the hatreds and lusts springing to birth around it, and the curse it so often seems to bring alike to "him that gives and him that takes," when one sees wealth,

remorseless in its pride of power, worshipped and cringed to by its recipients and its courtiers, it is easy to understand how a simple Christlike man like St. Francis would have no dealings with money, and shunned to touch it as we might some plague-infected garment. And yet how often has this hateful thing been redeemed from its base use to be the minister of right. Even money is not hopelessly lost for good. The sacramental efficacy of the widow's mite has not ceased through all the centuries since she cast it, in her humility, into God's treasury. The sand hides the gold of Pharaoh, and the imperial treasures of Augustus are vanished and forgotten, but that poor woman's gift still goes on : she gave to God, to the best and highest that she knew, and in giving, little thought that through the word of the Master of Masters, her tiny coin could become for ever a sacrament to humanity.

So may a little thing and a base thing be made a symbol of good ; most of all then should we find a channel of revelation in the highest thing we know ; not only in the sacrament of nature, but in the sacrament of man.

Surely to us the most wonderful thing in life is personality, and it is human personality which may be the highest sacrament of good, or the most terrible sacrament of ill. Our deeds are often at their best poor clumsy acts that stray in the dark; our thoughts are all imperfect, and our words fail to express them fully. But in spite of all

this failure, soul acts upon soul, we know not how, and the influence of one life upon another goes out continually like the myriad rays of a lamp. Silently men are changed and transformed by this influence. And there is no man but is doing his part for good or ill in this transforming work, whatever he may be, wherever he may go. Is it not thus that God's self-revelation in Christ becomes real to the Christian? God speaks to us in Jesus through human personality. We draw near to him as a man, we see his life and listen to his words, and as we gaze and listen, we feel that God has taken hold of us.

We are very near now to the greatest of sacraments. Did not the apostle speak of the union of the Church with Christ as μέγα μυστήριον, *magnum sacramentum?* The follower must bear, in some measure, in his life, the likeness of his master; the nearer we draw to him, the more his presence will mould our lives with the impress of his character.

In the ideal marriage, even as we know it realised sometimes now, husband and wife live in such close communion, so share their thoughts, and feelings, so enter into each other's lives, that each character, reacting on the other, grows ever more like to it. May not this thought help us to understand something of what is meant by Christ's union with his Church? The Church is humanity in its ideal form, humanity as a whole striving after its true goal, and the human race comes to

understand and realize its aim by union with Christ, thus gradually growing to be more like him and to share his nature. The end and the means to it are no mere rapture of holy emotion, no selfish joy of idle contemplation. The relationship is much deeper,; it must affect our whole character. It is not a rush of sentiment but a union of will.

After years of discipleship, and when he had gone through many things that he might draw nearer to the spirit of Christ, there came to St. Francis that wonderful crowning vision of the Saviour crucified, and amidst the joy of the vision there was pain. From that hour to the day of his death, the record tells us, did Francis bear in secret upon his body the marks of the passion. It does not matter how his frail frame came to respond to the thoughts that so dominated his mind: the important thing for us is not the accidental consequence to the body, but the attitude of mind and spirit, the union of will with a Christ suffering for humanity, bearing the sins of the world. He who has come to be made thus, in the humblest way, the comrade of Christ, must be the comrade too of all his fellow-men. Church and individual alike must show in character and life the meaning of this fellowship—fellowship in joy and in sorrow, too, willingness to learn, to give and to serve. Sharing the burdens of rich and poor, feeling the bonds that bind their lives, accepting ourselves responsibility and blame

for all ignorance and failure and wrongdoing, we may realize that the spirit of Christ is still at work in the world, that closer than our thoughts is the infinite love, and beneath our weakness the infinite strength of the Father's arms.

CHAPTER V

SOME OF NATURE'S SACRAMENTS

THE life of words is like in some ways to the life of men ; the soul changes within them, though the form remains the same. Yet while language is still living it may regain something of its old power beneath the poet's healing fingers, and now and again a master of words will recall for us some dying form of speech. A writer of power is needed, surely to win us back the older and wiser use of the word sacrament as a spiritual symbol, the revelation of the unseen through the visible, the unfolding of the unknown through the known. "The image of the world," wrote Bacon,* "is a message of the Divine wisdom and power"; to many a mystic it has been more even than this, and nature has been full of sacraments bringing life from things not seen.

The story is told of the old Calabrian Abbot, Joachim da Fiore, that as he was saying vespers in some little church among the mountains, the glory of the setting sun caught his eye through the open

* "Mundi imago divinæ sapientiæ et potentiæ præconium."

door of the nave. Suddenly realizing how much more beautiful was the great temple of the sunlit sky than the painted stone walls of his little building made with hands, he led his congregation out into the open air, and with nature's ritual around them they went on praying, gazing upon the picture of that evening landscape and the wonder of the sunset above. Though he was the adopted father of many admirable heretics, and for long a suspect himself, Blessed Joachim did not offend thus more than once, as far as we know, against the laws of ritual. But many another saint must have been tempted to do as he did. It is, indeed, easy for us to understand how in the old days every high place had its altar, and how again and again in later times solitude upon a mountain has seemed to give the most congenial atmosphere for prayer. Unconsciously, and quite apart from our beliefs, we instinctively turn in physical weariness, and often in other troubles, to the calm rest of nature. However much at times we may ponder her sterner side, and search in vain to explain to ourselves the mysteries of death and pain with which she confronts us constantly, it is not these things of which she speaks to man, when he goes to her sad and weary, like a tired child to his nurse. A feeling of quietness, beneath which lies strength, the dim apprehension of law, inexplicable indeed, but majestic and even beautiful, and above all that indefinable sense of peace which comes to us sometimes when we

are in the presence of that which is immeasurably greater than ourselves, all this may nature bring to us, when we go to her alone with our troubles. The old stoics must have sometimes felt this, though to the Roman mind at least wild nature did not usually possess the attractive power it has for us. One cannot but feel that when Marcus Aurelius cries to the Universe "that which is harmonious to thee, is to me too," he is conscious of something of this feeling in which our petty cares and troubles sink into nothingness amid the waters of the great ocean of universal life; though he arrived at the sense of this rather by inward meditation than by the contemplation of nature without him. And whatever the philosophers may have felt, one has no doubt of the poets. Propertius, alone in the Umbrian highlands by the sources of the Tiber, and Catullus, listening to the ripple of the waves of Garda, were able for a moment to rise above the pain and fire of passion into a calmer air; and yet the Roman poets have no such sense of the overwhelming majesty and order of nature as came to the Hebrew Psalmists.

The Roman had still in dim recesses of his consciousness the feelings of an earlier age, for which every wild wood was peopled with mysterious powers; nature was full of unknown agencies whose workings man could but dimly perceive, and the ancient rites of his religion were the charms by which he held at bay the strange potencies of evil that surrounded him. The

Hebrew poet looked on nature even in her sterner aspects with the eyes of faith; hailstorm and thunder, and the very sea his people thought of with such dread, brought revelations to him of the Divine power controlling all; and because of this sense of unity, the mystery and wonder of the starry sky seemed to his inward ear vocal with harmonies. In some ways there has come to us in the last two centuries fuller knowledge of that reign of law which formed a part of the religious consciousness of the poets of ancient Israel. Science speaks to us of the insignificance of man beside the illimitable greatness of the universe of which he is ever striving to gain some knowledge, and trains us to revere the majesty of laws which he can only imperfectly apprehend. Yet it is well known how sadly one great leader of modern science regretted that in his old age he was no longer able to know the feeling of the beauty and majesty of the Alpine landscape which had so often helped him in the past, because, as it seemed to him, the habit of scientific analysis had taken from him that simpler sense of the earlier years, the direct consciousness of a beauty he could not explain. So true it is that the child's eyes and the childlike spirit only find the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, which is hid to the wise. One must not suppose, indeed, that the closing of this one door into the unseen means that others, too, are shut, or else the lot of the city-dweller would be even worse than it is. Dr. Johnson, kindliest and best

of townsmen, though he said that to see one green field was to see all green fields, was yet keenly sensitive to many of the lesser sacraments of man's social life; and those who read his prayers and meditations know that the invisible realities were to him no mere object of intellectual belief, but the atmosphere of his inmost thought. Yet it is a thing to be regretted that the habit of scientific research and the ordinary course of town life do too often so mould our faculties as to impede that vision which the contemplation of Nature still brings to the simple heart. The student's loss has its compensations, and may even involve in it an element of the noblest sacrifice; but this cannot be said of the man whose whole life is wrapped up in the making of money and in the pleasures and concerns of conventional urban society. Such men are robbing not only themselves and their families of the things which make life worth living, but a far wider circle; for they are helping to keep in being a civilization which deprives thousands of city children of ever knowing what the sacraments of nature mean. The majority of Londoners have never seen the sun rise, save over smoking chimneys; they have never been able to watch the full moon sailing across the clear blue of a cloudless night; never known a morning filled with the joyous exhilaration of sunlight only dimmed by the mist of the vanishing dew. Still less do such town-dwellers understand of the lonely silence of the night in the

open country, in which men may feel themselves back again amid the childhood of the race. True, the amber haze of day in London and the flicker of the gas lamps in the streets at night have a beauty of their own; but it is dearly bought if the price must be, at least for the greater part of our poorer men and women, and for almost all the children, so heavy a one as this. The civilization which shuts out from its gaze the vision of the stars may well grow blind to greater mysteries; if men will not listen to the music of the spheres, how should they hear the angel's song?

CHAPTER VI

INSTITUTIONS AND INSPIRATION

ONE of the strangest and sometimes perhaps one of the saddest things that the student of history comes to realize must surely be that law which seems to doom every great ideal and every great movement to give birth to organizations which, while created to promote it, end by destroying it or diverting it to different channels. The cynics laugh at the contrast between present-day Christianity, as manifested in the dignity of the great historic churches and the rude simplicity of the Galilean fishers; in a narrower field the most sympathetic of French historians has traced for us the tragic way in which the great spiritual forces that made the early Franciscan movement what it was, were trammelled, if not extinguished, by the growth of the very society which they had called into being.

The mystic laments the fall from the unrealized ideal; the statesman makes rejoinder that the change is a needful one, and a necessary means of progress. So across the centuries contend with one another the men of method and of discipline

and the men of vision. Iscariot still follows in the steps of Christ, bearing his money bags, planning his arrangements of finance, ignoring his ideal.

Most of us must sympathize with Iscariot; we have so often been in his place, sometimes in spite of ourselves, perhaps. Or if we cannot sympathize with him, at least we must with Brother Elias, that born master of organization, the practical man who saw the beauty of the character of St. Francis, recognised the power of his attractive nature, and wished to turn all to visible use, to build up around him a great society which should be a guide to kings and prelates, a divine stronghold into which the beauty and the riches of the world should be brought. Elias doubtless felt that St. Francis was too good for this world; he himself dealt with men as men, understanding the worth of compromise, seeing the strength of institutions. The Elias whom most of us know well enough always tends to think of an ideal merely in its relation to institutions actual or possible, while the Francis, for whom we look too often in vain, thinks of the institution only as at best the imperfect embodiment of, or the means to, the ideal, and more often as the hindrance to be overcome on the way, "my brother the ass," who can only be guided with difficulty.

It is very easy for us to recognise in a far off time the failure of institutions to realize the ideal that inspired their origin, and we readily admit, in the abstract, the need for the ideal to dominate

the institution and the danger of the institution running away with the ideal. It is harder to see in our own lives how far we are allowing the machinery to take us from its object, how far that machinery is out of date or out of gear, since we are in the thick of it all, our ears dulled by the roar of the wheels. Assuming that we admit that Iscariot has his right and helpful place, how are we to find it and keep him there ?

It may help us to understand the danger that follows upon organization, if we make even a partial survey of a group of existing institutions and try to trace the history of some one of them.

How great is the failure of our countless institutions intended to promote social welfare, we to some extent realize as we take up such a work as the " Annual Charities Register and Digest," of the Charity Organization Society, and turn over those 700 pages describing the various societies, with all their staffs and offices at work in the city which is still the London that we know. Life appears almost to become at times to some men one long committee, but, little, after all, seems done. And this failure may be seen, to some extent at least, even in recent movements which were originally a protest against the narrowness and superficiality of earlier methods of dealing with the problems of modern society. The first thought of the men who conceived the idea of the university settlement was surely not to found a new institution, so much as to bring life into touch

with life, to make centres in which knowledge and experience might be collected, and from which men and ideas might be put at the service of all who had most need of them. Yet, in spite of themselves, they have almost become institutions; indeed, some settlements have frankly made it their aim to be such, and as one reads reports from across the water of all that our American friends are doing, one must admit that they have been most successful in achieving their object. If the settlement movement (as it is called) had not begun as it did twenty odd years ago, perhaps these wonderful centres of activity would not have come into being, or would have been very different from what they are. Yet would the founders of the first settlement have recognised as their spiritual descendants these men, unselfish as they are, whose methods are so different? Did there ever come before their vision the picture of a great building raised by some millionaire, maintained by like gifts, manned by a staff of salaried workers, and providing at the expense of far-seeing or enlightened manufacturers, healthy amusement and duly certified religious teaching and secular instruction to the workmen of these subscribers, as well as dispensing, on behalf of Dives, basketfuls of crumbs, both of plain and fancy bread, to Lazarus and his fellows at the door?

This is, after all, an instance of a world-wide process. We are face to face once again with the fact that men are constantly attempting to do their

duty by deputy; to subscribe to what they see to be a good work rather than to set about to do it themselves, to give of their money rather than of their lives. It is the danger that has beset the church from almost the earliest days, that the men who should be inspiring and setting others to work have too often simply done their work for them, or tried to do it. Doubtless the old robber baron returning from some murderous fray felt his heart uplifted as, rounding a corner of the road on the way to his castle on the hill, he came in sight, in the valley below, of the monastery he had founded, and thought of the holy lives of the monks, and of their prayers put up daily for him, who had such need of them. Doubtless, too, the good monks' hearts warmed towards the old freebooter who yet had so much good in him as to be their founder and protector. But it was small consolation to the men he robbed and put to death to know that some part at least of their possessions would go to Holy Church and to make possible the cloistered self-denial of these men of God. The baron's keep has vanished, and the abbey is in ruins, but is there not evidence that the same process is going on to-day? It is not always pleasant to think of the ultimate source of some of the contributions which are to be found in the subscription lists of churches and charities. The man who realizes this may well hesitate to appeal to the wealthy for money to aid his plans, for he sees the effect of such methods in making

religious and social agencies distrusted by many among the very classes which they aim at helping. He will rather honour the spirit in which such a social worker as Jane Addams of Chicago refuses to receive gifts of "tainted gold," as she feels the conscience money of some unscrupulous men of business to be. Yet here again he may be in danger of deceiving himself. He needs, it is true, to beware of accepting, still more of asking for, gifts which would merely be given to promote the vanity or to further the selfish interests of the giver, but can a man so easily wash his hands of the stain of the mammon of unrighteousness? Does he not rather need to recognise that, indirectly at least, the fruits of injustice enter into all the money that comes to him, since selfishness plays the part it does in our social life, and since our lives are so bound up with each other that no man can set himself apart from his fellows? Only let him see that the gifts he asks for will quicken in the givers the sense of social responsibility and increase the desire to do and to give more themselves.

The payment of subscriptions, if this principle be disregarded, becomes a soul-destroying process, alike to him that gives and him that takes. The pious Henry III. turned once at bay, after listening to the pleading of Friar William of Abingdon, one of the most eloquent of the early Dominican preachers, and cried to him, "Brother William, there was a time when thou couldst speak of spiritual things; now all thou canst say is,

'Give, give, give!'" One may compare the disgust with which a modern public schoolboy often turns from the familiar appeal of the clergyman who year by year comes to the school to preach on behalf of the school mission, and to carry back with him the usual collection, but nothing better. For the only thing worth giving or asking is life; and such a missioner too often fails to ask for it. Here surely we may find a hint of the explanation of all successful social work, which is the passing on of life from life, the result of the contact of personality with personality. In so far as organization promotes this and makes it possible does it stand justified, and only by this test.

One does not wish to undervalue the associations, the reflexes of life, which institutions so often pass on, or the wealth of a great past which they keep in store for us. But death is perhaps as needful and as inevitable for the body corporate as for the individual; for both it is often true that whom the gods love die young. It is surely better to spend and be spent in a short life rich in ideas, than to carry on a long existence by the aid of a comfortable endowment, which may prevent men from realizing how far out of touch they are with the actual needs of those about them. It is not known whether any council of bishops has decided if there be humour in Heaven, but one is inclined to think that the solemn way in which men shake their heads and lament the impending decease of an outworn institution must sometimes be greeted elsewhere by a peal of celestial laughter.

CHAPTER VII

PRIESTS AND PONTIFFS

SOME day we may hope to see among our great national museums one made to illustrate the religions of the world, from the rudest rites of the savage to the highest developments of Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Judaism and Christianity. This museum of comparative religions does already exist to some extent in embryo in every great collection of antiquities, and the students of ethnology and folklore have been long at work in preparing materials for its catalogues. A partial glimpse of what it would contain is given in such a world-wide missionary exhibition as that organised in connection with the work of the London Missionary Society at the Agricultural Hall in the early summer of 1908.

The survey of such a great collection cannot but be stimulating to every thoughtful student. Some of its visitors may see in the hideous idols of the South Seas and in the pictures of the medicine man at work at his craft only a further incentive to aid the spreading of their own faith, which they feel more strongly than ever to be immeasurably

raised above the rites and thoughts of the savage. Others may look with sad eyes at the long series of pictures that is spread out before them, for they see everywhere only the same superstition, the primitive fears of unknown forces, developing with the growth of civilization into religions which expand with man's own needs and conceptions, intermingling with his hopes and aspirations and refined by his thought into the creeds and theologies of the higher faiths. Through all they trace the same instincts, and feel that the savage kneeling before a blood-smeared stone explains to them the Nicene Creed, that the hierarchy of the Church has its origin in the spirit-doctors and fetish-men of a simpler age.

Yet to some at least there may come far other thoughts than these, as they ponder over what they have seen. Everywhere they behold men stretching out their hands towards something above them, beyond them, struggling with fears, oppressed by dim consciousness of wrong, hoping for some way of peace. The priest himself is a witness to this innate need of the soul, since his very presence speaks of man's dependence on the higher than himself, while it also shows men's interdependence upon each other. For the priest's position is impossible, unless he is in some way regarded as a means of communication between man and God, and a centre of fellowship among men. With this thought in his heart a man may look back, not without hope, upon the melancholy pageant of

the centuries, and watch the strange part that the priest has ever played in it. The modern sceptic joining in the sad cry of the old Roman poet

> "So many are the ills that superstition has had power to urge men to!"

has had, after all, like the rest of us, but an imperfect vision of the confused drama of history. He sees priesthood as a selfish influence playing upon human ignorance and baseness; he does not perceive the wider priesthood at work of which this is only a perversion, nor realize that priesthood and prayer underlie all that is highest and best in human life. For priesthood is the highest expression of man's social nature, by which he enters into communion with his fellows and with God. It is only because we narrow the use of the name of priest that we do not honour it aright, for in its essence priesthood is not a profession, but a high duty to which all are called.

If we were to try to define this true priesthood, might we not say that a priest is one who, reaching out after the higher and better than himself, helps others onward too, bringing to them something to which they could not of themselves have attained, who shares his good with his fellows and takes upon himself their ill, making communion possible for them, because he has entered into communion with them himself. But it is not easy thus to summarise in a sentence a work which is in truth as wide as human life; wherever a man interprets

in the terms of his own day the unseen and enduring realities, and helps those about him to view things in their true relations, he is performing a priestly function ; whenever he takes up their disadvantages as his own, in fellowship with suffering, and shares with others willingly the result of their own wrong-doing, then is he doing a part of the priest's divinest work.

The germ of such an ideal of priesthood may be seen in far-off days. The family priesthood of the Hebrew patriarchs, and of the early ages of Israel, contains, unconsciously at least, the promise of it, and in a wider form it formed the subject of the noblest prophetic appeal: Israel was called to be a nation of priests, revealing to other peoples the message of God.* It may be said, too, that the later history of the Jewish nation has shown in practice the value of the simple family priesthood of the parent, in keeping alive a faith which from the destruction of the temple down into the late Middle Ages was cherished and maintained entirely without the help of a professional ministry. Even when after the time of Maimonides, the rabbis began to be paid for the time which they took from other work to devote to the exposition of the Law for the benefit of others, there was still no arbitrary division between clergy and laity. The human centre of Jewish religious life is not the rabbinic ministry, but the lay priesthood of the family.

* Exodus xix. 6. ; Isaiah lxi. 6.

It was natural that the ideal of a universal priesthood should find expression in the earliest literature of the Christian Church, reviving and enlarging beyond the boundaries of race the appeal of the earlier Hebrew prophets: twice in one writing of the Apostolic Age* are Christian folk spoken of as a holy priesthood or a royal priesthood, while in the vision of the Apocalypse the same ideal is held up for the Church that now is and for the Church that is to be, in the millennial reign upon earth of the faithful disciples of Christ.† In the Pauline epistles the disciples are not actually called priests, but both the individual Christians and the Church as a whole are spoken of as Temples of the Holy Spirit, and appeal is made to the Romans "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable temple-service."‡ Moreover, the body in such a passage does not mean so much the flesh and blood, as the whole visible personality of a man; in like manner in that triumphant pæan which seems to have been written by the apostle in the consciousness of the nearness of impending martyrdom, the thought in the words "I am already being poured out as a libation"§ is that his whole personality is being poured out and offered up as

* 1 Peter ii. 5, 9.

† Rev. v. 10; xx. 6.

‡ Romans xii. 1.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 6. *Cf.* Phil. iii. 17: "If I be poured forth as a libation upon the sacrifice and service (Liturgy) of your faith;"

a final priestly act of cheerful giving: for the libation was the glad offering made not merely by an official clergy, but by the head of the household as its family priest, or by the individual as sharing in the universal priesthood of humanity.

Priesthood was regarded, it would seem, in the earliest days of the Church as a function to which all its members were called, but even in the apostolic age certain officials were appointed to fulfil particular duties in the Church on behalf of their fellow members. Yet several generations appear to have passed before priest and presbyter were regarded as fully equivalent terms.* As Church organization developed, the gifts of the Spirit were conceived less and less as widespread throughout all the parts of the body, and more and more as confined to certain classes, while in course of time these classes became more official and professional in character. Yet if we remember how repeatedly institutions tend to fetter and destroy the ideal that has created them, we shall find cause to wonder not in the growth of clericalism in the Christian Church, but rather in the fact that all down the ages of her continuous life men and women both within and without the ranks of her officials have realized, in part at least, the higher ideals of true priesthood.

* Irenæus is apparently the first to use the term *ἱερεύς* (sacrificing priest) instead of the earlier title of *πρεσβύτερος* (elder).

It is easy for us to see the harm done by the official spirit, and the hypocrisy which is so often its shadow; still we must not forget that noble army of men who have looked with far other eyes upon their office, feeling themselves the representatives for the sake of order of the Church as a whole, and realizing more or less consciously that their duty is not to be the delegates and deputies of the layman in discharging his priestly functions for him, but to be a means to help him to realize them more fully, aiding him to think more, to do more and to pray more for himself. Especially true is this of prayer, which the true priest must ever aid in others as well as in himself, whether the prayer find utterance in words, or remain unformed even into the mental words of thought. For is not prayer, in this widest sense, the lifebreath of the Church and of the individual alike? Prayer is indeed too often spoken of as though it implied words: whereas it may exist even without conscious thought, going on whenever the soul's hand stretches out after God, whenever man seeks after goodness, in every act of will by which he is brought into touch with that Spirit from whom all right thoughts, "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed."

The aim of conscious prayer, in its highest form, must be communion, and a communion of will which may continue when the conscious prayer itself ceases, underlying the work and thought of everyday life. To this communion the true priest

will ever direct his fellows, knowing that as he and they come to share in it more fully they will be the better able to help those about them towards their goal. He knows too, by experience, that there is a law of spiritual magnetism, by which just as in the physical world a weak magnet is strengthened by contact with a strong one, so in the spiritual world the will to do the good and to live aright may be strengthened by coming into the presence of a stronger will, and most of all by contact with the Divine will.

To the Christian, Christ expresses in human form what this will stands for, and so for daily life he is still felt to be the High Priest of mankind, the touch of whose spirit polarises and renews our wills, as they come into contact with his life. The one early Christian writer who has developed for his readers the thought of Christ's priesthood, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, sees in the earlier Jewish priesthood with which he was familiar only a somewhat imperfect type of his ideal: with thoughts turned upon the pontifical acts of Christ, which he realizes to be the keystone and crown of human history, he does not stay to consider how the priestly function may, in some measure, though imperfectly, be shared by the humblest disciple, too. Yet this thought of participation in the highest priestly work of the Master seems to have been present with the Apostle Paul when he spoke of "filling up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ," and the same ancient

Catholic view which sees in the good deeds of the saints the continuance of Christ's work, the endless treasure flowing out from his life, would lead us also to see in their sorrows and hardships, where these have been willingly borne for the sake of God and man, a continuance of the redemptive love of the Cross. The thought of the High Priesthood of Christ is not lowered by the fact that priesthood, even in its highest mediatorial side, is to some extent shared, however faultily, by every good human life, but it is rather made intelligible to us, because it ceases to be something wholly alien from us. The life of Christ is not utterly isolated from the rest of the human race, for it could not be this and remain human ; it is rather the key for the Christian to all other goodness, explaining the meaning of sacrifice, and the possibility of sorrow and pain being made steps by which men may be raised upwards towards God. And just as the supreme sacrifice of Christ cannot rightly be separated from the rest of his ministry, but rather is understood as its consummation, concentrating upon Calvary the work which was the aim of all his life, so is his High Priesthood not something foreign and separate from the life of man, but the manifestation of a principle which is at work wherever good men live and die. Yet the more truly his followers have become priests themselves, the more have they realized how imperfect their priesthood is, how deep their need to find it constantly renewed by contact with the

unique and perfect high-priesthood which they find in Christ.

The close vital connection between the disciples' work and that of their Master is one of the thoughts most prominent in the last great discourse of Christ to his disciples as pictured in the Fourth Gospel, and it is emphasized in what commentators have called the great priestly prayer. The disciples' lives are to be in close union with their Master's as the vine branches with the parent stem, and beneath all their deeds must flow his living spirit. They must be in union with each other as he is one with the Divine Father, so making real to others the continuance of his life. Their whole lives are to be one great act of priesthood realizing itself through fellowship. For without fellowship priesthood cannot be, and Christianity could not exist. The Church is a society in which men are linked to each other and to God through Christ; there is no place in it for the selfishness of isolated individualism, or the centring of thought upon personal salvation alone. Its members belong to each other in belonging to their head. The metaphors used in the apostolic writings to describe the Church are all social; it is a body, a building, a city, a kingdom, in which every part is in relation to others, and only thus can join to make the whole. The more the children of the Church realize this, the more truly will they become a fellowship of friends, and show themselves such in daily life; theirs will be

no exclusive friendship, but one which overflows to all, in honest sincerity, because they cannot but work for all men's good.

When Christ went about in Galilee and told men that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, was he mistaken? Or is the fellowship which he founded not itself a part of that kingdom, the seed which is already growing and spreading throughout the whole earth? Many strange fowls, perhaps, we may think, have lodged in its branches already; but if the fellowship be strong and true they cannot do it great harm, and under its shelter may live not only these but a host of singing birds. The great thing that all have to remember is that members of the fellowship must needs hand on to others the life that has been given to them. That great title by which the Pope is known as Vicar of Christ upon earth is not an idle one: every good Christian Pope has been that to some extent, and so, too, has every Christian disciple, in so far as he lives in the Master's spirit. For language grows old so quickly, that we forget that the vicar is one who acts instead of another, in his place, just as vicarious suffering is suffering borne by one on behalf and instead of another. But we need to explain and translate the appellation "Vicar of Christ" into daily life by means of that other noble title which shines like a jewel at the head of every Papal bull and rescript—"servus servorum Dei," servant of the servants of God. The Vicar of Christ will show himself such by serving his

fellow-men with his whole life, ungrudgingly and gladly, knowing that every act and thought given to their welfare is given to God, and that the Father would have men seek Him not afar from human life and labour, but amidst the toil and sorrow of that sinful humanity for whom Christ died.

When we seek to find how far this ideal is being carried out within the Christian Church, we may well be saddened by our own failure, and by the way in which organizations intended for the common service have come to be treated as an end in themselves. Yet we must remember that in the ancient liturgies, which seem sometimes hard for the democratic modern mind to understand, the priest does not speak or act for himself, but as a representative of the whole fellowship of the Church ; the cries and prayers and strivings of long generations of human lives are joined in the words of the prayers that he uses, and the beautiful ritual of the altar is intended to be a living picture of spiritual symbols, full of meaning not only for himself, but for all who worship with him.

This view of prayer finds fitting expression in a sonnet of Hartley Coleridge on *The Liturgy*, which deserves to be better known.

> Oft as I hear the Apostolic voice
> Speaking to God, I blame my heart so cold,
> That with those words, so good, so pure and old,
> Cannot repent, nor hope, far less rejoice.

> Yet am I glad, that not the vagrant choice,
> Chance child of impulse, timid or too bold,
> The volume of my heart may dare unfold—
> With figured rhetoric or unmeaning noise—
> Praying for all in those appointed phrases,
> Like a vast river, from a thousand fountains
> Swoll'n with the waters of the lakes and mountains,
> The pastor bears along the prayers and praises
> Of many souls in channel well defined,
> Yet leaves no drop of prayer or praise behind.

We cannot but sympathize with the poet: so powerful and attractive are the ancient words that have come to us down the ages fraught with the memories of man's need and spiritual striving, so unworthy often do we feel the language of extempore prayer. Yet if we have only once or twice experienced what unpremeditated prayer may be, when it is offered in the true priestly spirit, in deep sympathy with the needs and longings of those present, diverse though they be, and in close harmony with the peculiar demands of the time and place, we know how such prayer can, as nothing else, gather up our hidden desires and bring our whole souls with it into the sense of communion with the source of the strength and help that we need, towards which our arms stretch out as we listen, and are not stretched in vain.

It is easy for us to see how often priesthood in worship has come short of its ideal; still sadder surely has been our failure to make real the priesthood of daily life. A family priesthood of the simplest kind has been for centuries characteristic of Hebrew religious life, and this household priest-

hood of the father, or of both father and mother, is a very real thing in Christendom, especially where the influence of the Reformation is strongest. But we need not only this intimate and beautiful priesthood, but one which shall extend to the wider families of the city, the nation and mankind. We have to remember that our lives are not our own, that we are each representatives, and that every act of ours must have pontifical significance for others; more than that our very thoughts and desires go out far beyond our own lives and help to weave cords which shall pull others upwards or drag them down to our level. The words of Christ's prayer in the Gospel "For their sakes I sanctify myself" are full of significance. If the Master thus consecrates his life and overcomes the evil, thrusting aside the temptation to take the lower and easier path and dedicating his whole will and nature to the Divine will, in order that his disciples may be helped to reach unity with each other and with him, then must the disciples too understand that their own efforts after a better and cleaner and more unselfish life are not made for themselves alone. There is no man that fights in the secret of his own life against evils and temptations, of which others can know nothing, but may feel cheered to remember that his is, after all, no lonely battle. He is an outpost, hidden from his fellow combatants perhaps, but his welfare concerns the whole company, his victory is not for one life, but for all. In this spirit surely

in every act and thought of life a man may be made a priest.

How beautiful an idea that was which in ancient Rome made of bridge-building a religious deed, so that the chief bridge-builder, the Pontifex Maximus, was also the chief priest. Nor was the thought that bridge-building was a sacred act wholly lost with Paganism, for in the middle ages amongst the many religious societies which existed to promote human welfare and to lessen by sharing them the burdens of life, was the Order of Pontiff Brothers or bridge-builders. Perhaps such societies as this came into being more especially to make easier the perilous pilgrims' roads along which men must pass to visit the holy places and shrines of the Saints. Sometimes a pilgrim who had made the journey would join himself with others who had realized its hardships to make the way lighter for those who should follow in their steps. Sometimes, it may be, men who had not the time or money and perhaps lacked even the courage to make the perilous voyage themselves, yet gladly gave of their labour to help to build the bridge. They could never make use of it, but they hoped that others, better men and more fortunate than they, would pass over it to behold the holy sights which they themselves might never see, and long after they were dead their work would thus stand fast. Thus the great bridge of Avignon still rests on the piers built seven hundred years ago by the Pontiff Brothers, and the feet of

the little children dance over the arches which the pilgrims used to tread.

To many of the early bridges there still cling memories which tell of some noble founder, but there is a peculiar beauty in the story of the building of the Bridge of Avignon by Saint Benezet. Of this Saint Benezet, or Little St. Benedict, for the friendly pet name can but imperfectly be rendered into English, we know only a little ; but across the mists of tradition we catch a glimpse of him, a boy tending the sheep upon the distant hillside and there receiving a strange heavenly call, bidding him go build a bridge where none had yet been, across the broad river at Avignon, where hitherto men had crossed the Rhône often with peril, and always with toil. Shepherd's staff in hand, the lad came to Avignon and entered the church ; there he spoke his message to bishop and people, and pleaded with them to help build the bridge. Bishop and people were incredulous, and so too was the mayor when appeal was made to him, but Benezet persisted, and little by little men began to help him. They tell of how he was in some way able to raise the big stones and to lift weights which others failed to move. The first piers began to rise ; Benezet and others joined the Order of Pontiff Brothers and under his guidance the work went on. It was the labour of years, and of immense effort, and before the bridge was completed its boy builder died and they buried him in a little chapel above one of the great piers. But

the building went on, the spirit that Benezet had brought to it did not die with him, and in due time the bridge was built, where men would have toiled and struggled still with the waters, but for the faithfulness of a shepherd boy.

In the old Pagan days, at least in many lands, the priestly act of bridge-building had its darker side. Here and there a curious tradition still survives to show that once the making of a bridge was accompanied by the sacrifice of a life. The victim was offered to propitiate the jealous powers which otherwise might wreak their vengeance upon a larger number, destroying the bridge and the passengers upon it by some sudden storm or earthquake.

We have ceased to think the gloomy thoughts which made men build their bridges thus in the ancient ages. But still, if the bridge of life is to be well and truly laid, there must be sacrifice at at its foundations. The thought of the architect, the beauty of the curving arch, all may crumble and fall in the time of stress when the floods are out and the river rushes in boisterous strength against the piers, if the bridge-builder has not done his priestly duty. It is good that man's life should be well ordered, clean and happy, useful to others and harmonious in itself, but deep down in it, if the life is to stand the strain of evil days and to do its full service, there must surely be the strength of willing sacrifice. The ideal of such Christian sacrifice is no sullen, grudging surrender

of desire, no mutilation of man's true nature, but the glad gift of life to life, which mingles vicarious sorrow with vicarious joy. And as this spirit spreads with the growth of that Kingdom of God which Christ proclaimed to men, the human race will realize more and more fully all that is meant by the priesthood of humanity.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANSWER OF FAITH

CENTURIES ago, in a far-off Eastern land, a philosopher poet set to verse the sad music of his heart's doubts and longings, and the cry that rings again and again through his poems finds an echo in men's hearts to-day. The mystery of life and death over which Omar Khayam pondered has never ceased to attract the thoughts of men. Returning spring brings the old hopes back to our lives, sometimes with the same sadder echoes that troubled Moschus and Horace, and still thinkers and poets bow before the terror and the majesty of death which they are powerless to explain.

What use then is it to trouble ourselves with a problem which is as old as the life of man and which the greater intellects have failed to solve? Think about it we must, again and again, unless we deliberately stifle our thoughts when they turn to the things which matter most to us. And since we are social beings, born dependent on each other and made to help one another, it is natural that we should wish to share our thoughts.

Whence ? and whither ? and why ? is a triad of questions over which men have broken their hearts ; in a sense they must always remain unanswered, or at least incompletely answered ; and yet as long as men have made them, one response at least has brought with it peace.

The problem of life and death was stated long ages before Omar's day by another Eastern thinker, and with a poignancy greater at times than his. Nowhere in Hebrew literature do we get a deeper sense of the gloomy mystery of life than in the book of Ecclesiastes, where again and again the writer makes lament over triumphant injustice, and the end that comes alike to good and bad. There passes before his eyes the melancholy pageant of the children of men, journeying along through the ages to the common goal of endless oblivion. "All things come alike to all," he cries ; "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not ; as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil that is done under the sun, that there is one event unto all ; yea, also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." And so too, he goes on to speak of death as annihilation which puts the noblest of dead creatures below the basest of the living. Probably most men have known some

dark hour at least in which the tragedy of life comes home to them, and they have wondered whether after all the old thinker was not right. We take up as our own the refrain of Omar :—

> I came like water, and like wind I go,
>
> Into this Universe and why not knowing,
> Nor whence, like water willy-nilly flowing,
> And out of it as wind along the waste,
> I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.

Again there echo about us out of the past those ancient questions to which the mind of man is ever framing answers, ever finding unsatisfying those which others have made. How then can religion help, if even with its presence those answers still remain incomplete ?

When faith comes into our hearts, the mystics may tell us, uncertainty does not go out of them. We are still facing an unknown future, and have no more knowledge of the past than have our fellows. But a new factor has come into our consciousness. We are able to go back and face the old questions, and lo, they no longer seem to cut, as once they did, at the roots of our being. We have hold of something which goes deeper than doubt can reach, or fear can fall to. And strangely enough, the very same metaphor which Omar uses to express his despair comes from the lips of faith, but with how different a meaning :—

" The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell

whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the spirit."

Beneath the unanswered question now, there is the abiding sense of the reality that endures, a conviction that, though we do not understand its purpose, life is not purposeless, and that though we cannot lift the veil of death it is only a covering which hides from our eyes a wider and greater world than ours.

It may be that some will feel that all such talk of faith is meaningless to them. Religion and faith convey no such notions to their minds as they seem to imply to others. What they want is the clear demonstration, which a physicist might give us. If life goes on after death there must surely be some proof of it.

If we try and look at life merely from the standpoint of the physiologist, we do indeed perceive that we only observe it in connection with certain structures of organic matter, and that, as far as we are able to see, every act of human consciousness is accompanied by certain processes and changes in the grey tissues of the brain. When those tissues are injured, the expression of this consciousness is interfered with, and when a certain condition of the brain material comes about life ceases, as far as our observation goes. So far as we can observe, indeed, every act of life is accompanied by and connected with some material condition, or at least some material concomitant. But this is as far as the physi-

ologist can take us. What life is he is still unable to say. To speak of life as energy, and to say that energy is a potential property of matter, is only to hide from ourselves with words the fact that life can only be explained to us in terms of life: the physicists cannot tell us what life is.

If we admit that we cannot explain what it is in its ultimate nature, we are yet all of us conscious enough of what we mean ourselves by life. The word has a real significance to us, although we cannot define it or explain it in any way.

Can we then find any answer from physical science as to whether or no our life continues when the bodily change which we call death happens? Since life is always connected, as far as we are able to observe it, with certain physical conditions of the body, can it continue when those conditions are no longer present?

There have been many thinkers impressed by the sense of a universe governed by necessary and unchanging laws, who have felt that they could only answer that since life is in our experience always accompanied by certain material conditions, it must cease to exist when those conditions have been removed.

There is one great assumption, however, which consciously or unconsciously underlies this position, that the only universe which exists is one that is intelligible to our thought, and that something

which we cannot possibly understand, necessarily cannot possibly exist.

But there is yet another thought which seems to have escaped such a thinker: the possibility of the co-existence of more than one world and of life passing from one world to another. Mathematicians have already shown the possibility of this by discussing the existence of a fourth dimension, and even working out problems involving the assumption of the existence of this fourth dimension. The suggestion has been made especially easy to grasp in the remarkable anonymous romance "Flatland," published some thirty years ago, which pictures the world of two dimensions, wherein one person gets the notion of the existence of a third dimension, and the extraordinary results that follow his heresy, or madness, as it seems to his less enlightened fellows.

If the theory of the existence of another, or other dimensions be a tenable one, we can conceive of the existence of a number of worlds around us, co-existing with our own and including it, of which we are either wholly unconscious or only very dimly conscious, and that not by the faculties by means of which we have knowledge of our own world.

Now if we suppose that somewhere within us, at the centre of our lives, is some meeting-point, some door through which we may have contact with these other worlds and pass out into them,

we can also conceive of a development growing out from this point of contact into that larger life of which we should necessarily remain unconscious here, or even if our whole nature were suddenly to be filled by a consciousness of how its life extended beyond this universe into those other worlds, we should yet be unable to express in terms of our own world this wider life, or could only express it by symbols. The incapacity of our friends to understand our experience would be no proof that it was not true, nor would our own inability to express it in any way lessen the reality of that experience to us. If such a hypothesis be correct, what may happen at death may be that we pass out of the narrower world of three dimensions into the wider world, which includes this and much more.

Another way of looking at the problem has been to conceive of our various senses as channels through which we have entered into communication with the world without us. At present we most of us are only conscious of five such channels. We may conceive of the possibility of many other channels of which we have no experience (and indeed observation of certain living creatures has already led to the hypothesis of a sixth sense, different from any of our own), and we can also think of the channels as being one by one closed. So that at death we may conceive of all our existing lines of communication with the outer world being removed, and wholly new channels, with

what may seem like an entirely different world, being opened up.*

Such an explanation of the working of our universe is but a hypothesis. Yet after all, it may to some extent help us to understand phenomena otherwise very difficult to explain. Are not the mystics and seers, the inspired poets and prophets, just those whose lives are more in touch than ours with a world we cannot see, often able only imperfectly to express themselves, but yet conscious of vast realities beyond our ken? And may we not to some extent look upon faith as such a faculty, or sixth sense, taking hold of the unseen and translating it into our own life?

But all have not this faith, it may be urged; it is strongest often when the intellectual powers are weak enough, and men of the greatest genius tell us they are wholly without it. Yet cannot we conceive of a community of people almost wholly devoid of one of our own five senses, say that of hearing? How difficult it would be for one of them whose ears were suddenly opened to explain to his friends the new world about him. Imagine these people watching a skylark, and looking on with astonishment at the joy of the one man who heard it singing. A dull brown bird flying aimlessly up into the air: why should he look on it

* This suggestion, and several of the preceding ones, are set forth with much greater fulness and clearness by Mr. St. George Stock in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1906.

with such wonder? They see all that he sees, and if he should try to explain his feelings as he listens to its song, will they not one and all be convinced that he is mad, or that he is at best only recounting some subjective illusion? If he would convince them, let him translate into terms of sight these curious sensations. He cannot do it, and they can only pity his condition.

This may help us to realize how narrow a view that is of life which conceives of this world of our consciousness as the only one which exists. It may even help us to frame a physical hypothesis of another life; but this is not enough for our need. If we are to go to the centre of the problem we must turn not to physical difficulties, but to the moral and spiritual ones. It is above all in its failure to solve the problems of our inward life that the materialistic explanation of the world breaks down.

All the explanations thus suggested have been too much akin to the physical one to touch the heart of the problem. It is when we realize the meaning of faith in our own lives here and now, that we cease to trouble about the future. In the realization of the supreme value of goodness, and the infinite meaning of it, we begin to understand that it must endure, in a sense far deeper than mere extension in time or space.

Faith is the organ of spiritual apprehension, and comes into play whenever we recognise in practice the claim of the ethical ideal as opposed

to the materialistic, when the will to do the good triumphs over the desire to get the good for ourselves. In every act of the inward life by which being is set above having, and by which our own visible happiness is subordinated to that of our fellows, there comes into play this activity of the soul which we call faith, by which we come into contact with that which underlies our hopes, and put to test the things we do not see.*

As this faith comes to dominate and control our lives we are able to reach a point at which the old doubts cease to pain us. We may still repeat to ourselves the riddle of life, and seek for an answer; but though we may continue to puzzle to find an explanation, we are conscious that we have known something in the presence of which the ancient questionings cease to trouble. We feel that somehow we have come into touch with a presence which brings with it the solution of the greatest of all problems. In the depths of our lives we listen to the answer of faith.

Thus it is that the very words which ring with such a sense of awful despair in the poem of Omar may express nothing but peace to one who has gone through this experience: "He knows about it all, He knows, He knows." The difference lies in this, that to Omar there is as he writes no sense of contact with the Unseen, the Omniscient, in whose power he lies; but to him who

*Ἔστι δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζόμενων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπόμενων.—Heb. xii.

has heard the answer of Faith that sense of contact has come. He knows that in this deepest experience God has come into touch with him, and henceforth life to him both came and goes, out of God's hand into God's hand.

When Christ was confronted by the sceptical Sadducees with the problem of human life enduring beyond the grave, he pointed to their faith that the heroes of old time, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had had knowledge of God, and told them that this knowledge of God meant life. A being that has come to have communion with the Eternal cannot be conceived of as passing away with the the changing husk of things, the accidents of the body and the outer world. Eternal life does not consist in the duration for ever of an accidental process. If we could conceive of a jelly-fish continuing thus an indefinite existence, which should involve neither inward development nor the possession of higher powers than such a creature is commonly believed to be capable of, we should still surely be unable to speak of such existence as eternal life. For what we mean by this is not the mere continuity of existence from a present of transient accidents into a like future, but something which goes beyond death because it goes beyond life too, as life is ordinarily pictured.

But can we hope to tread ourselves this way of the Divine life? There are times when the spiritual end which is ever present in our lives makes itself evident to us, and now and again

across the centuries come periods when the latent desires of men seem to come to the surface. Such was that epoch of spiritual unrest and stirring which came to England in the seventeenth century, in which the Quaker and Quietest movements had their birth, and it may be that we are not far away from the dawn of such another age to-day. Now, as then, men turn from orthodoxy in search of something deeper and wider than its mere creeds can give. The works of the old mystics are reissued from the press, and in the by-ways of literature men are seeking for paths that may lead them to inward peace. It is still twilight time. No prophet's voice is clearly heard calling us towards the full light of the day, but our eyes turn towards the horizon and watch for the signs of dawn.

We share a common life, and our need to-day is the same, though we may express it in different ways. We are conscious of something lacking in our lives, sensible at least at times of the evil there. We feel the darkness about us, and long for light and for a power that shall take us out of our lower natures, upward and onward. At such moments we may earnestly desire to come ourselves into communion with God, that his life may flow into ours and transform it. But how, after all, are we to attain to some dim realization of this knowledge of God which illumines the lives of the great mystics and brings peace to-day to many a life which otherwise would be full of painful failure?

Perhaps another saying from the book of Ecclesiastes may put us upon the path to find the answer. It is one of those words which come sometimes to poet and thinker, bearing within them fuller depth of meaning than was clear to the writer who first framed them, groping as he may have been at the edge of some great truth which he has never consciously apprehended. "Also He hath set Eternity in their heart."* The words were written in sadness, but there is within them the promise of hope. There lies at once the key to the mystery of human unrest and the hope for some deeper peace than the world without can give. Somewhere in the depths of his own life every man is in touch with the Eternal. Sometimes we are conscious of this higher reality surrounding us, as pervading all about us; on some glorious day alone with Nature the wonder of the world flashes upon us, and all things become radiant with a new light which fills both us and them. Or silently in the quiet of the night, before the mystery of the starry sky, a great peace comes over us in which our own tiny life seems to take its place amidst the ordered harmony of all the spheres.

But we come, too, to a vision of the Infinite in other ways; whenever we see a good deed done, and behold its goodness, we are touching the hem of the robe of the Eternal. In the inward recognition of the supreme beauty of unselfish love we are directly conscious of a flash of intuition

* Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

which illumines not the intellect alone, but our whole nature. We are brought into touch with God at the very centre of our lives. Nature is indeed the priest of the Eternal, and every high place has still its altar, where we may worship in spirit and in truth. But in an even deeper sense is the priesthood given to man. There is no man but is called to that true temple service wherein every good act is filled with meaning, not for himself only, but for his fellows. Every pure and unselfish deed is sacramental, bringing the soul of him who beholds it into touch with the God who inspired the act. And this contact with the Divine through goodness in another may come to us in spite of all intellectual barriers. If with our whole heart we honour a good deed done our nature does obeisance to the God who is working within it, who makes the deed of worth. Unknown to ourselves, we are drawn nearer to Him, and His life touches our lives, and transforms them a little nearer to His likeness. For every pure and lovely act that men do is not only a revelation but an inspiration and an influence drawing others upward. We have never had trust enough in the infectious power of a good deed.

Thus as we are faithful to the highest it has been given us to see, our sight will be strengthened to see further: at the moment of vision we are conscious that in the presence of the good thought, the good personality, we are in contact with the source of strength that we need. We must keep

close to the same source when the darkness is about us.

It is surely this truth that has helped to make the worship of the Saints the power for good which it has been in the lives of devout souls within the Catholic Church of Rome and of the East. They have done reverence to that in the Saints which was of God, and in drawing near to them they have been drawn near to Him also. The worship of the Saints has done harm, not only in the case of the false reverence of the market place, but whenever it has led men to turn from the source of the saint's power to the accidentals of his life and character, and to imitate the man, rather than to get into touch with his spirit. But the words of the old Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," express a great reality. We can get the greatest help from this belief in the dark hours of the soul, and in all times of transition to fuller knowledge of the truth, if by belief in the Church we mean belief in the whole body of those who have come into touch with God through Christ, and through his spirit, and who can be recognised as his disciples because they bear in their lives his likeness. As we believe in the Church in this sense, we shall strive to feel the inner bond of union that connects together the good and holy of all creeds and nations, and to bring our lives into harmony with the same spirit of unity.

Men who have shown singular devotion to some

hero saint whom they love may have erred in the past in trying to reproduce his life under altered conditions; and such imitation has sometimes led them all too far from the spirit of the one whom they have sought to follow. St. Francis of Assisi, and in later days John Wycliffe, and George Fox, have each had followers such as these. But there is at least one to whom we may look for this guidance without any of the narrowing influence that other hero worship so often brings. We cannot read about our heroes, look up to them and think of them, without coming under the influence of their personality and without our character growing unconsciously to bear in it some faint trace at least of theirs. Let us then turn thus in the dark hour to Jesus Christ. No matter if for the moment we cannot regard him as we have been taught the Church does. Let us put aside all theories as to his birth; the miracles which puzzle us, even the fact of the Resurrection, and the speculations of theology as to his Divine nature. Not because these are not important matters, and not because we may not have to go on thinking about them, and seeking more light about them; but because for the guidance which most of all we need we can go deeper than all these doubts and speculations. Let us make Christ our teacher as his earliest disciples did, who knew nothing about his birth, and only followed him at first just because they felt he was far better than they, and they had need of him and loved him.

As we do this, and simply endeavour to keep near to his thoughts, to think over the meaning of his words and to act as men who are seeking to follow him, we shall begin to realize that there is in Christ himself a greater miracle than anything recorded of him in the Gospels, and that whatever the correct theory of the Resurrection may be, He is still a living influence working upon our hearts and inspiring us onward to good. When we doubt of God because of the world's evil, we can hear his voice speak of the love which watches even over the fall of the sparrow, and some sense of that love comes to us too, in the midst of our darkness. And when the sense of our own wrong-doing is heavy upon us, we may feel cheered to think that our Teacher never turned from the men of the world and the profligate when they sought his help in honest sorrow, but rather sought them first, and for the disciple who denied him had nothing but a look of love. He knew what it was himself to be discouraged, to spend long hours in prayer, to be misunderstood and to fail. And sometimes there may come to us a glimpse of even deeper depths into which he went for his fellow-men. As we feel all this we may not be able to explain it, but we know ourselves the stronger for it, the better able to face misfortune and temptation and suffering, and to hold manfully to the best that we know, in the midst of doubt. And thus, little by little, we come to feel we have found one who not only makes us realize what failures

we have been, but is ever calling out the best that is in us, drawing us on to a higher ground and clearer air, where our vision carries further, until at length there may come to us some glimpse of the Divine Love at work in the world and within us, and some sense that Christ has brought to us God's expression of Himself in the terms of humanity, so that we begin to understand a little of the meaning of the words: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

And meanwhile, let us have faith too for those who cannot yet feel this attractive power as we, perhaps, have known it. In the Fourth Gospel the Master tells his disciples that he has other sheep who are not of this fold; we may picture his thought as going out to far-off lands where men were striving to do their duty or to find the truth without any knowledge of him, without any intellectual knowledge of God perhaps; some legionary guarding the peace of the empire at the gates of the North, some Roman government official upholding the dignity and justice of the law amongst jealous robber tribes and unscrupulous traders, some Greek philosopher seeking to know a yet higher law, and simple men and women practising it unknown to themselves; or, further away in the far-off East, the Buddhist missionary teaching the worth of gentleness and mercy, or the disciple of Confucius learning to reverence the great moral truths he knew, and to apply them

in all life's relations. Some day all these should hear his voice; already they were his sheep. And so to-day, wherever the lonely thinker spends his hours in seeking, and the servant of science unselfishly gives up all thought of personal advancement and delight in the pursuit of truth, wherever in the politics of towns or peoples men seek to work out a higher form of public life, or in business as in leisure to be faithful not merely to their own interests, but to a wider ideal, we must see the seekers and servants of good, who are God's servants too. Sooner or later for these too will be fulfilled the words: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF PEACE.

THE sense of ancient peace, the quiet beauty of the ruined abbeys which Turner and many a lesser artist loved to paint, must often have come home to many who visit them, who have no knowledge of architecture and little thought for history. But, even with these passers by, something of their interest in the old ruin is perhaps due to the thought of the life which was lived there in the days gone by. Less worthy traditions have marred the glory of the earlier days, and dimmed the recollection of the long struggle with nature, the hardships of a simple, self-denying life, the toil of the scholar and the conflicts of the saint, but as we look at the broken pillars and the silent aisles and arches where once the music of men's chanting rose and fell, we feel that it is not only the thought of the vanished greatness that moves us, but the sense that this was a place where prayer was wont to be made. We try to picture to ourselves sometimes the life of mediæval England, and how these ruins were once places living and vibrating with thought and spiritual effort, centres

from which pulsed out many a good influence to uplift the lives of men.

It is true that the monastic ideal was in some respects narrow and one-sided, that its social and religious life was marred and maimed by an artificial celibacy being put in the place of the natural family life; but granting all this, had not the monastery at its best a noble place in the nation, which is too often lacking to-day, or but imperfectly supplied by other things?

The rule of St. Benedict prescribed that seven hours daily should be given by each disciple to manual labour; it was a far-seeing provision, in which there seems to have been realized the thought that study and prayer alone without active work could not provide a complete and healthy life. The Benedictine and Cistercian Abbeys were, at their best, never self-centred institutions whose members pursued their own spiritual welfare without regard to the needs of the world outside. Their scholars copied manuscripts and wrote books for the instruction of men, they were schoolmasters to rich and poor; their lay brothers laboured in the fields, making waste places smooth. Their intercessions went up for others than themselves. Every now and then guests from the great world came to stay within the abbey walls for rest and refreshment of soul, and now and then to end their days in an atmosphere of prayer and peace. In some ways, as we know, the coming of the Friars marked a stage of higher development, in that they

shared more fully the life of the people, at least in the simplicity and poverty of the early days of the Franciscan movement. Yet another development again is seen in the communities of Brethren of the common life, and in the béguinages of the Low Countries, which combined something of the possibility of individual home life with a common union for prayer.

It is interesting to be able to see at Ghent and Bruges to-day these quaint communities, where each inmate has her own house, with perfect liberty to come and go, to mix with the outer world, or even to return to it altogether; but with a common chapel, and a common religious bond visibly uniting the whole sisterhood. Is it not possible, if the Reformation of Henry VIII. had not been so largely political in its origin, that the monastic system might have been in some measure adapted to the needs of the world of to-day without those acts of spoliation which gave the new Tudor aristocracy its wealth and left us these piles of ruined buildings?

A famous French novelist who had lived and written as a materialist, turned in his closing years back to the ancient Catholic Church, finding peace and refreshment as a lay guest within the walls of a monastery. Much of his later work may seem exaggerated, and even morbid, in its mysticism, but it was sincere because based upon his own inward experience. In one of these later religious novels he speaks of cloistered convents

as being "the spiritual lightning conductors of Europe." To him the lives of these poor women, shut off in perpetuity from their fellows, were not wasted, but provided a sacrifice of spiritual struggle on behalf of the erring world outside.

Perhaps Huysmans was not right in thinking that the self-inflicted loneliness of the Poor Clares and Benedictine nuns stood in so high a relation of service to humanity as he pictures; certainly the life of practical prayer lived out by a faithful sister of St. Vincent de Paul amongst the sick poor whom she tends, seems far higher and more Christlike than that of the cloistered ascetic; but still the fact remains that if we are not materialists, but have faith in the effectual working of all true prayer we must hold that the intercessions of the cloister, in so far as they spring from true hearts of faith, are not wasted, but, in some way we cannot understand, flow out for the uplifting of the world.

As we look out at the life of to-day must we not feel that in its rush and hurry, with the thoughtless materialism of its outlook, there is more than ever need for the essential message of the monastery, fellowship in self-surrender and self-control, comradeship in study, work and above all in prayer? Is it not possible for us even now to have in our midst here and there little colonies which will do for our age the work which the best monasteries did for the Middle Ages, and perhaps

something more even than this, in that we need no longer have their limitations?

What would such a monastery be, if we can picture it in its main features?

The first monks were always anxious to have their cells built in some out of the way spot, and sometimes moved the site of their abbeys to avoid the dangers to their inward life which seemed to them to come with the invasions of sounds and sights, which the approach of "the world" brought with it. We do not now believe in the separation of the life of the Church from that of men outside it, and there was at times, perhaps, something selfish in the monkish love of quiet isolation, but for certain high purposes of the monastery there was a sound instinct in it too. If the community remains in living touch with those without, sending its members out from it and receiving guests on visits long or short, it will, in many cases, do its work best if its situation provides it with a natural atmosphere and background of peace and quiet, corresponding to that inward atmosphere which is to play around the life of its members.

Our monastery then will be placed in some little frequented spot, if possible close to one of those natural bridges over which we may most easily pass into communion with the life of nature unmarred by man's civilization; at the edge of some rolling heather moorland, where for miles you may walk and see no sign of house or road, under a ridge

of the limestone fells, or beneath the shadow of a great chalk down, where the sheep wander freely, or if mountain and moor be too far away, within reach of some solitary beach where the sea and wind sing to each other; or with an outlook over some wide plain, with broad horizons giving some sense of openness and freedom.

Thus the companions of the House of Peace will have constantly near them the opportunity of silent intercourse with nature; they can go out, wet or fine, sometimes alone and sometimes in company, to let the fresh winds and the sunlight and the spirit of the great open spaces play about them, making them stronger and fitter for joy and labour, for study, work and prayer.

For the House of Peace will be a dwelling place where work is done. It will have its garden, with flowers and fruit trees to be tended, kitchen herbs to be raised; there will be beehives and poultry, and it may be the cares of a small farm; but beast and bird will be treated as friendly companions, objects of the Divine care and therefore, too, of the good will and reverence of the dwellers in the House.

There will be books: especially such as will help most the inner life of man, the *Acta sanctorum*, and all stories of the saints of God; the records of other religions than ours, the works of philosophers, poets and thinkers; and such a general library as would befit a home whose windows look out on to many sides of life.

But it will not be enough for the House to be supplied with opportunity for fruitful study, quiet cells for work and meditation, and with manual labour in garden, field and orchard for all who are fitted for it. Side by side with all this, lest the life of the place grow self-centred, there must be some redemptive work going on, for those who would not themselves have been helped by all this storehouse of good things, apart from the mediation and ministry of its inmates.

This might be found in the education of backward or delicate children from poor homes, physically or mentally in need of special care and protection, or in the care of convalescents; it might be found in the training upon the adjoining farm or in the carpenter's workshop, as well as in special classes held within the House itself, of a small group of lads from some reformatory, or juvenile offenders to whom our present prison system offers only imperfect means of succour. In helping in their training, in joining in their games the companions of the House of Peace would find a noble part of their own work and joy; they would hope too to share with these younger brothers not a little of the deeper inspiration of common worship.

There might be as a part of the House rooms for married companions, while single men and single women could be lodged in separate wings or in hostels of their own. Grouped near there might be cottages with homes linked to the House

by ties more or less close, whose inmates would share in much of the work of the community and in the privilege of common worship. The centre of all would be the place of prayer, the hearth where each companion would come to rekindle his own torch of love and aspiration; a place always open, used in common at certain times and by all companions who were able to come there, used also frequently throughout the day for silent prayer and meditation, whether by the companions and their guests, or the passing stranger who might care to enter in.

At least at one meal during the day the ancient practice would be maintained of one companion reading aloud from some helpful book while the rest kept silence. During certain hours of the day silence would also be observed, though with no slavish bond.

The Buddhist monasteries of Burmah fulfil in the life of that people a place which might, to some small extent, be taken for us by a group of such Houses of Rest. It is the duty of every Burmese Buddhist who desires to fulfil the whole ideal of manhood to pass some portion of his life, it may be months or years, it may even be only weeks or days, as a monk in a Buddhist monastery, learning its lessons and drinking in its peace. So, too, into our House of Rest might come, at different stages of their lives, the eager seeker after truth, the strong man in the midst of the battle of his work, the weary,

tired and disheartened by their failure; all would find a welcome, a home of refreshment, where in the atmosphere of prayer, with the daily round of simple work, of study, of open air life and common worship, they might find guidance and renewal of strength. Some might only stay for a short while, others for longer periods; yet others might find in the House of Rest their central home, returning there at intervals after periods of labour as social ministers in the crowded towns, in which, perhaps, a number of different branches of work might be affiliated in some way to the central House of Rest, which would be a storehouse to supply help to these branches far away.

One of the rocks upon which the old monastic system made shipwreck was the corporate selfishness which came to the monks through their possessions. They had renounced individual wealth, but they were too zealous to secure for their abbeys the property which might enhance their usefulness and assure their future growth. Believing as we do that institutions like men must die to give place to new life, we must not try to secure an earthly immortality for a good institution, any more than for a good individual. It would probably be best then that our House of Rest should not be a legal corporation, able to own and receive property. Its companions should be tenants on God's earth; their House should be lent them in trust, but not be owned by them. It might still, however, be possible for those who

desired for a longer period to have the privilege of holy poverty, to renounce for the time being their own income, without taking any vow or handing over to the community possessions which they might rightly resume at a later date, in trust for the world they would serve.

Paul Sabatier has finely said that one of the great claims which distinguishes still the ancient Catholic Church is the unlimited opportunity for self-sacrifice which she holds forth to her children. We cannot get the utmost except for the highest. Our house of prayer and of work, where self-denial might be found to the full united with the joy of service, would give this opportunity of self-surrender, of self-discipline untainted by false asceticism, of comradeship in sacrifice and in the purest joys and highest aspirations of the heart, which in the depths of our soul we need and long for. May it not even yet be built, this House of Peace and Prayer?

CHAPTER X.

THE PATH TO UNITY.

A GREAT patristic scholar who, though a lover of theology, is also a lover of his fellow-men, has related how, journeying across the lonely desert of Arabia the Rocky towards the holy monastery of Sinai, he came upon a band of peasant pilgrims; he did not know their language nor they his, but each made the sign of the Cross as they drew near one another, and as they did so they seemed at once to be friends. He was greeted with welcoming smiles, and the way through the wilderness was lightened by the sense of Christian fellowship. It cheered him to feel how that ancient sacred symbol had surmounted the barriers of race and speech, making these strangers feel that they were comrades and fellow pilgrims travelling to a common goal. And yet he could not but recall with a sense of sorrowful irony the thought that, had he made the sign of the Cross not in the Greek, but in the Latin way, he would have been met with sullen indifference and distrust, if not with anger. These simple Russian peasants were the spiritual descendants of the

brave men who centuries ago went to death at the stake rather than place their fingers and thumb in the new-fangled way, which, to their mind, symbolished some error in the conception of the doctrine of the Trinity, a departure from the one orthodox fashion by which the Church should be guided in making the holy sign.

It is difficult for us to realise that so small a change should make so great a difference to the welcome given to a stranger; and, yet, perhaps some of the differences which separate Western Christians to-day may be almost as foolish in the sight of the angels.

An English parson once sadly told how, when travelling in France in his cassock, he had been delighted by a number of ecclesiastics coming to call upon their foreign confrère, and how, to his dismay, they all incontinently fled, as from contagion of plague, when they realised that he was only an Anglican; he doubtless felt acutely the blindness of the worthy Romans who failed to recognise the apostolic nature of his orders. As acutely, perhaps, some Nonconformist minister at home may have regretted a similar attitude on the part of the good parson to the unhallowed ministrations of the dissenter.

When we look back over the long centuries that separate us from the early Apostolic Church, there are few things which make us sadder than this spirit of distrust and hostility, showing itself between men who alike believe themselves to be Christians.

It is no new thing ; what is new to-day as a widespread spirit is the desire to transcend our differences, not by despising or ignoring the things which separate us, nor yet by the victory of one church or sect over another, or the absorption of the lesser by the greater community, but by the better understanding of each other and of ourselves, the closer co-operation where co-operation is possible, and, it may be, the gradual realisation of a unity deeper than all that keeps us apart.

We remember how the mocking scorn of Celsus made sport of the divisions between Catholic and heretic Christians of his day, while both alike were a persecuted minority struggling against the edicts of pagan Rome. Montanists and orthodox suffered sometimes side by side, and yet, while awaiting death in the same prisons, they would hold no communion with each other.

This tragic mutual intolerance between Arian and Athanasian, Iconodule and Iconoclast, goes on down the ages ; was it not, in part at least, one wonders, due to the fact that each party considered that they alone had the monopoly of truth ; that their own doctrine contained the whole truth and nothing but the truth ? Free trade in thought, if it be right to use the metaphor of commerce for the life-giving intercourse of mind with mind, is late in coming in the world's history, but it has surely come to stay. As we look back over the great divisions of the past, we feel now that there was some right at least on both sides : in some

cases we find it hard to understand how men could have fought so bitterly over what seems now so small. The shape of the tonsure of the clergy, the date of the celebration of Easter, and such grounds of difference, caused almost as much bitterness in their day as did profound dissensions on the nature of the Godhead or the meaning of the Incarnation. Even when no theological difference separated men, within the Church itself and within a single religious order, there has been the bitterest disagreement and separation of spirit over things we now hold trifling; such a matter, for instance, as the shape of the hood to be worn by Observant Franciscans, at the time of the rise of the Capuchin Friars.

We have come at length to understand that the human spirit expresses itself in various ways in its upward striving, that the language of worship may vary for different races, for different men within the same race, for the individual himself with his changing needs, and that in differing we need not always condemn each other. So, too, it seems that men are ceasing to feel that uniformity in Church government is possible or even desirable. The work of the Free Church Council with all its limitations has enabled the members of the larger Nonconformist bodies to co-operate together and understand each other better, to feel a common unity of membership while retaining their loyalty to their own denomination. This drawing together has been realised, not by discussion of

denominational differences, but by common work and common worship, by sharing in the same efforts, listening to the same messages of guidance, following as co-disciples along the same road.

Still more remarkable as an expression of the vital forces at work in English Society is the growth of inter-denominational fellowship shown in the Student Christian movement, and the conferences which it has promoted, characterised by joint study of social and missionary problems, and by union in worship, in which denominational barriers have not indeed disappeared, but have sunk on to a lower level, for many at least of those who have been thus drawn together to behold the vision of the vast work still unaccomplished at home and abroad, with the knowledge that all alike are coming for strength to one source, striving to serve one Master.

While a friendlier understanding has been helping men to cross by sympathy the ancient chasms which have separated church from church for so long, there has been visible too in recent years a marked tendency towards greater organic unity between religious communities closely allied to each other. Locally this has occasionally found expression in the springing up of " union churches," whose members originally belonged to different Nonconformist denominations, but such union sometimes has come about for convenience rather than from conviction, and has not always been permanent in character. It is different with the

union of the three Methodist Societies now combined in the United Methodist Church, or with the great movement which brought about the United Free Church of Scotland. We may look forward in the near future to still further developments of this spirit, and already a leader of Free Church thought, Dr. J. H. Shakespeare, the Secretary of the Baptist Union, has outlined proposals for the incorporation of the great Nonconformist denominations in one national communion, a Free Church of England, which would retain within its compass the different rites and systems of Church government of its various constituent churches. This would still leave unsolved the greater problem of the separation between the Free Churches and the Church of England, but it would be in itself an immense step forward as a practical recognition of common discipleship, and as such would be welcomed warmly by many of us who, almost certainly, would be left outside the ecclesiastical membership of this great Free Church. The Free Church Council has already done something to make such a union possible; and even if no formal connection between various churches whose members are associated with its work should be achieved, yet, in point of fact, a common membership is being realised by them. The great leaders of Free Church thought and action are recognised not merely as belonging to one denomination, but as prophets and teachers for all. The worth of their ministry is felt even by those who cannot

recognise the validity of their orders, because of its non-episcopal origin.*

And yet all such plans for the promotion of visible ecclesiastical reunion do not touch the heart of things. In earlier ages men have sought reunion through ecclesiastical organisation and through fuller realisation of doctrinal unity, and

* It is possible that some day this difficulty might be surmounted by the willingness of a small group of such Free Church leaders to receive conditional episcopal consecration at the hands of some friendly Gregorian or Nestorian Bishops. They could then preach from the pulpit in Church or Cathedral at the invitation of the authorities of the Church of England, and, by receiving their episcopal orders conditionally, they would place no stigma on their Nonconformist colleagues. The Free Churches would then be somewhat in the position of the old Celtic Churches before the conquest of Britain by Latin Christianity, when Bishops did not rule by monarchial methods over fixed dioceses, but exercised a more personal influence from their monastic homes, where sometimes several Bishops resided together at once. We should thus have a Free Church College of Bishops exercising authority by reason of their personal and spiritual qualifications and seeking no other sanction than the weight which such an influence would give.

There may be difficulties in the way of such a proposal, but many Nonconformists who could not agree to accept the diocesan method of Church government would have little or no objection to such overseers of the Free Churches, who, holding an unpaid office, carrying no legal privileges, would have no right to rule, but rather be recognised as teaching, advising or pleading, with the authority of an elder brother in the spiritual family of which they would be members. Such a simple apostolic episcopate, strengthened from time to time by the addition of new members called to accept their office by the voice of their Church, might afford for those who have need of it a sign of visible communion between the Protestant Churches and the older episcopal churches of East and West.

have failed repeatedly in the attempt. Can we hope to achieve union now by some ingenious scheme of comprehensive Church Government or by the formulation of a new creed where all the old creeds have failed to unite men ?

Would not even the widest Church leave outside its membership multitudes now drawing together in Adult Schools and Brotherhoods and kindred Societies, under the inspiration of Christian influence, but without any formal connection with the Church, and beyond them an unknown number of men and women whose lives turn for their inspiration to the Master whose name they reverence, but do not venture to take ?

Yet such men, whose life-creed is better than their thought-creed, are a proof that discipleship is a vital relationship, involving more than a mere emotional surrender or intellectual submission. It will surely be in the more faithful working out of this conception of discipleship, that Christian folk will be able to achieve that spirit of unity which is of more value than external Reunion.

Wherever wrong ideals of life exist, we are coming to feel there is a loss, not merely to the individuals immediately concerned, but to an ever widening circle about them. We cannot acquiesce in moral failure or divest ourselves of responsibility for it, because we ourselves adopt a different standpoint. Much less can we consent to make a truce with what we see is wrong in the Church to which we belong.

A sixteenth century Cardinal who was engaged in controversy with his Protestant colleague, Odet de Coligny, found a curious consolation for the practical failure of the Church of his day by his exposition of a text in the Song of Solomon : " I am black but comely," was, he held, a prophetic saying applied to the Church, black in point of morals, comely in point of doctrine.

To-day, however much we may differ in doctrine, we are coming to feel that in every failure to realise the Christian ideal of character, the loss of each religious community is the loss of all ; wherever a Church rises to higher levels of sacrifice, or raises the standard of its members' lives, the benefit is felt far beyond its own borders.

The saints, whether canonised or uncanonised by authority, are the common heritage of all who are striving to find their lives dominated by the same purpose ; they are a constant unifying influence throughout the world, even though their messages differ as greatly as they often have done in the past.

As the different Christian communities frankly face the unconquered evils in the world about them, as their individual members set themselves to wrestle against the selfish instincts in their own lives, and to become more effective agents of peace and goodwill amongst their neighbours and worthier citizens of the state, they will find themselves working side by side with allies they had not hitherto known ; in extending the bounds of

knowledge and the rule of a kindlier law, sharing the same spirit of sacrifice, facing the same difficulties, they will be united by more than a common hope, they will feel within them the inspiration of the same spirit.

If then the new spirit making for co-operation and truer understanding of each other which is already at work amongst the different churches is to have fuller influence, do we not need to set out with a new enthusiasm upon the common task which awaits us at home and abroad, and to work out together new applications of the social teaching of the Christian Church? For many, this will come along the lines of political and municipal action, in using what powers and duties the law already gives us, as well as in making better laws or claiming extended facilities for communal action.

But however much the powers and functions of the state may be altered and extended, there are vast regions which must for ever lie outside its domain: evils which laws and bye-laws cannot control, where the mysterious forces of personality have play, and the healing spiritual influences may work, which come with the direct contact of goodness and unselfishness, upon the broken and bruised failures of humanity. The state may punish wrong-doing, it may prevent particular acts of crime, it may confine its hardened criminals within the walls of a prison. It cannot convert them from themselves, it cannot redeem them. The state may give pensions to old age, and make

provision for the sick, the blind and the maimed, the epileptic, the lunatic, the idiot and the feeble-minded. It cannot bring to these darkened lives what most they need, the sunlight of human love and comradeship, the healing influence of an atmosphere of prayer and of unselfish service in which they may come themselves into touch with the Centre and Source of this pure and cleansing stream of good.

This must be once again the task of the Church, as it was in the best days of the monasteries, the guilds and confraternities of the middle ages. We need to have a fresh Crusade, not to conquer any far-off enemy, but against our apathy towards the social evils in our midst. Can we not hope to see a network of new guilds and brotherhoods, settlements, houses of peace and healing, covering the length and breadth of the land, where men and women will sacrifice some portion at least of their lives, giving of their work and leisure to this task? Some will afford a shelter to the outcasts of society, who are driven now from prison to casual ward, and from workhouse to jail, for whom the commercial world has no use, to whom the law offers nothing but threats and penalties: others will provide training for boys or girls who have been committed to industrial schools, or will offer a fresh start to those who have fallen into serious crime: there will be some which will try to provide a home and work for the weaklings, or those who are prevented by mental or physical defect from

holding their own in the ordinary streams of life. Others again will offer an asylum to sickness, helplessness and old age. Centres of prayer, as well as centres of work, they will be the schools of saints, where men in serving the needy in many different ways, will all the while be brought nearer to the ultimate reunion of Christendom and of humanity.

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